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THE SONG OF SOLOMON

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CHRIST AND HIS BRIDE

AN EXPOSITION OF THE SONG OF SOLOMON

BY

CORA HARRIS MACILRAVY

THIRD EDITION

PUBLISHED BY

THE ELBETHEL PUBLISHING HOUSE

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PREFACE

FOR some time, God has been moving upon me to send out a simple Exposition of the Song of Solomon, inasmuch as He has been revealing to me some of its hidden treasures, and thereby my own life has been enriched, my heart has been made more tender, and my soul has been drawn closer to my precious Lord. The earthly and earthy have receded as He has led me on through this storehouse of rich things from His own table.

From time to time, different articles have appeared in the ELBETHEL paper, that were written upon portions of the Song of Solomon. God has used these articles to stir up many of His children to a deeper hunger for the knowledge of God and of the Truth as it is in Jesus; He has planted in their hearts a greater determination to enter into all He has prepared for them. He has aroused in many hearts a deep desire to know the interpretation of this precious book, which desire they have expressed in the letters that have come up. Through this increasing hunger and the desires thus expressed by the readers of the ELBETHEL paper, God has confirmed the leading which I received some time ago, as coming from Him.

This labor is, in the strictest sense, a labor of love; first of all, toward my precious Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who is becoming more and more the Beloved of my heart and my all and in all. Next, it is a labor of love toward those whom He has redeemed through His own precious blood, and whom He is calling to follow on more swiftly as His appearing draws nigh. It is undertaken for the sake of those in ELBETHEL who have been edified and uplifted as we have meditated together upon portions of the Song of Solomon. It is undertaken for the help and edification of all who have come in touch with us

through the paper, and who are really a part of the ELBETHEL work, although they are able to meet with us only occasionally. The food which God has given us, however, is for all His hungry children everywhere, whether they are in touch with us or not. And we know that only those who are hungry for God and the things of God, will care to partake of these deep things that God has prepared for those who love Him; and which He reveals to us through the Spirit.

God is not leading me to write a learned Commentary upon this book; neither am I qualified to go into it in a way that would satisfy a merely intellectual craving to know its meanings, according to the interpretations of different expositors. I deeply feel my own insufficiency for an undertaking of this kind, and I approach this ministry which God has entrusted to me, with a keen realization of my own weakness. But I have the help of One who is mighty, I lean upon Him who alone can reveal the meanings of His own Word.

I look to Him to lead and anoint me as I gather up some of the precious thoughts and truths that are hidden away beneath the surface of the Song of Solomon. I would be the channel through which may come those uplifting and edifying interpretations, which will encourage every hungry soul to rise higher into the pure atmosphere of God's presence, and to sink deeper into Christ and His love, than they have ever gone before.

The meanings of the Song of Solomon are by no means exhausted in this Exposition, for every page and line is freighted with Heavenly Manna for hungry souls. In these last days, when the Coming of the Lord is so near, there is a longing and reaching out in the hearts of God's children who are deepest in Him, and who are following closest after Him, to know more of the interpretation of this book that deals exclusively with the love and vital relation between Christ and His bride.

May those who read this Commentary lose sight of the frailty of the earthen vessel that God is using, and may they be brought by the Spirit to a closer walk with their Heavenly Bridegroom, until they walk Home with Him and sit down with Him upon His throne, as He sat down with His Father upon His throne.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There has never been any serious doubt concerning the Canonicity of the Song of Solomon, although to those who do not understand the spiritual meanings underlying the surface, there arises a question as to how this book could find a place in the Holy Scriptures. To one who sees only the surface meanings, it appears to be a setting forth of earthly love, expressed in a too florid and oriental style. When the real significance of the Song of Solomon is revealed to the heart, however, all such questionings fade away; and the surface meanings also fade away, leaving only those that are spiritual. That this book is inspired and has a place in the Canon of the Scripture, is proved by the fact that it is found in all the Hebrew manuscripts, and was accepted by all the oldest authorities.

With the most of God's children, the Song of Solomon has always been a closed book; none has been more neglected. With the exception of a few verses here and there, there has been but little opening up of the real meanings; but even the few verses that have been understood, have proved an abiding blessing. As in all spiritual things, we see in the interpretation of this book that "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them because they are spiritually judged."

The real exposition of the book is not to be found in itself alone, but in connection with the other Scriptures, and by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. While there are not as many Expositions of the Song of Solomon as of many of the other books of the Bible, there have been many and varied Com-

mentaries. Those that were written some centuries ago, are for the most part, more spiritual and nearer the real interpretation than many of more recent date.

This is a significant fact, which shows that the leaders and teachers, and through them the people of God, are not drawing nearer to God and becoming more spiritual; but are drawing away from God and becoming more materialistic. One cause of this is, that Higher Criticism has crept in and is leading God's people away from the spiritual and belief in the supernatural, into the material and unbelief in the supernatural. This has had a marked effect upon some of the late Commentaries, not only of the Song of Solomon, but of all the Word of God. The Bible is being honeycombed with materialistic interpretations; and skeptics, not only among sinners, but among those who are called by the Name of Christ, are rejecting much of God's Word as not being inspired.

There are three general lines of thought brought out by Expositors of the Song of Solomon. The first is advanced by the Jews and has to do with the history of their own people. They believe that the book is a portrayal of the relation between Jehovah and Israel; that it is an allegory setting forth God's choice and guidance of His Ancient People whom He led out of Egypt. It pictures their journey through the wilderness and into Canaan, where they are left looking for their Messiah.

The second interpretation held by the Christian church is, that the Song of Solomon is an allegory setting forth the relation and love between Christ and the church. It begins a short period preceding the birth of Christ, and closes with the call of the Gentiles; it leaves the church waiting and looking for the return of Christ. This exposition is extended to apply to the church throughout this dispensation, which will close at the Second Coming of the Lord. Those who give this line of exegesis, also see in the book a revelation of the love the church should have for Christ; as well as the great love of

Christ for the church, for which He gave Himself that "He might present the church to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing."

The third exposition also held by the Christian church, is that it is a revelation of the love, dealings, and relation between Christ and each believer who will make up His bride. The last two expositions are closely allied, as the individual believers make up the body of Christ. The intimate relation and ecstacy here portrayed, are not found in the lives of any but those who are counting all things but dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and who are following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.

The fact that the experiences set forth in this book are not applicable to every believer, will at once show that not every believer will be in the bride. God provided so that all the redeemed could be in the bride of Christ, it was not His best will that only a few should be chosen out of the many who are called. He planned an "Uttermost Salvation" through Christ's redemptive work, and all can be saved and become overcomers; none are excluded if they are willing to yield to God.

No doubt there is ground for each of these three lines of interpretation, as the symbolism in the Old Testament is many-sided. But, without going into the merits of the Jewish Exposition, I will say that the one which is of interest to us, will be found in the last two lines of thought. A touch of the historical, and reference to the Jewish interpretation will be given from time to time, as we proceed through the book.

In quoting the text, I have not confined myself to one translation, though I have used the American Revision the most. I have, however, reserved for myself the liberty of using any other translation that brings out the underlying thought with the most clearness. Occasionally I have quoted the King James, and a few times I have given a literal translation of the original text.

The word, "virgin," as used in the Song of Solomon, has the same meaning as in the Book of Revelation. It means those who have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb; those who are not guilty of spiritual adultery. It is those who are running the race that has been set before them, and are in the company of overcomers who will make up the bride of the Lamb, and will sit down with Him in His throne.

There are three divisions of time in the Song of Solomon. The first two Canticles are represented by Night because of the absence of the Bridegroom. This first night was just before the first advent of Jesus Christ, when the Jews were looking and longing for the coming of their Messiah. This night was long, but as those who knew God, diligently searched through their own prophets, they found the time was nearly ripe for the Messiah to come.

The third Canticle is Day because of the Bridegroom's presence. At last He came and is with the virgins of the bride for one brief day, which is set forth in this third Canticle. The last two Canticles are again represented as Night because He has withdrawn again. This second night will be ended by the return of Jesus Christ, which will usher in Eternal Day; and then there will be no more night.

There are four vineyards, or gardens (these words being synonymous), and they always mean the Kingdom of God. There are four mountains especially mentioned. The mountain of Bether (ch. 2:17), meaning separation, or division. These are the Mountains of Separation from God, caused by man's fall and God's broken law. Over their high peaks and deep chasms, none could pass excepting the Lamb of God.

The Mountain of Lebanon (ch. 4:8) is a borderland between the enemy's country and the Promised Land. These mountains are the hiding-place of wild beasts, symbolic of the world, of sin, and of the enemy. It is a dangerous ground,

which is neither with the enemy nor with God; neither in the world nor separated unto God.

The Mountain of Myrrh is the sepulchre of our Lord; and the Hill of Frankincense is Calvary (ch. 4:6). From these arise the Mountains of Spices, which is the fragrance of Christ's finished work upon the Cross of Calvary.

There are five Canticles, or Cantos (which means "songs") in the Song of Solomon. I have referred to these briefly as we have come to them.

One striking feature of this book is that, to the casual reader, there appears to be much repetition. Of course this would lead to apparent repetition in the Exposition; but it is well for us to take special heed to those portions that appear to be repetitions. The Holy Spirit, who inspired this book, is not like man who repeats himself because of his incapacity and imperfections. When the Holy Spirit deals and speaks of the same thing over and over, it is because we need special dealing along that line. It is "line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little."

For example; much is said in the book about our speech, and well may God impress upon us the urgent necessity of letting Him control our lips, when His Word is filled with warnings and instruction along this most important line. Much is said also of the vineyard and the need there is for faithfulness in tending the vineyards of our own souls; and we can see the love and wisdom of God in this and in all other apparent repetitions contained in the Song of Solomon, or in any other portions of the Word of God.

Another striking feature in this book is the unquestioning obedience and fidelity of the bride. We may well take heed to this marked characteristic of the bride of the Lamb, for it sounds a solemn warning to those who are in the race to be in the bride of Christ.

An epitome of the Song of Solomon is found in the forty-

fifth Psalm; and many snatches along the same line of revelation and prophecy are found in portions of other psalms. In other books in the Bible, noticeably in the writings of Isaiah, we find kindred thoughts and expressions, which show that the same Spirit was the Author of all.

This book is a Heaven-sent Song of holy love. In its language, which the Holy Spirit has given us, we find a treasure house of expressions through which we can pour out our adoration to our Beloved; through which we can express the love, which we could never utter with our own poor language and with our faltering lips. The Song of Solomon consists of the heart-converse between the soul and Christ, and between Christ and the soul. It is not only the expression of the heart-cry of the bride toward Christ; but it pictures the soul-journey of the bride, from the first experiences she has as a babe in the Lord, to that mature, intimate relation, which will merge into glorification at the Coming of Jesus Christ.

In this book, the inspired writer portrays the love and the hunger that will be found in the hearts of the company of virgins who are attaining unto the high calling of God to be the bride of His Son. But the love of Christ is also set forth; and we begin to realize a little more fully, that He has loved us with an everlasting love, and because of His great love He died and redeemed us.

Only as we receive that which is revealed of the beauty of the bride, of her fidelity, of her preparation, and as we continually apply it to our own lives; only as we hasten to make ourselves ready, shall we reap any benefit from understanding the meanings of this precious book.

Not only is there an unearthly perfume wafted from every verse in this incomparable book, but throughout its pages, perfumes, spices and oils have a most prominent place in order that we may apprehend the place that the attributes of Jesus Christ hold before the Father; and the place that they must

hold in the lives of His followers. Let us not undervalue these marked repetitions and prominent points which the Holy Spirit seeks to impress upon our hearts, and which must be lived out in our lives.

Canticle One. *Ch. 1:1 to 2:7*

CHAPTER II

THE INEFFABLE SONG OF CHRIST'S INEFFABLE LOVE. 1:1-3.

1:1. **"The Song of songs, which is Solomon's;"** or "Which pertaineth to Solomon." Although by inspiration, God gave us this precious book through Solomon, even in the introductory verse, the Holy Spirit does not mention him in his own person; which proves that the personality of the earthly King Solomon does not enter into the book. The book may have been brought forth through some incident in Solomon's life; but, inasmuch as the incident never appeared in sight, we can scarcely say that it is lost sight of. Many conjectures have been advanced as to which of Solomon's many marriages, this song celebrated: but the fact that the Holy Spirit is silent on this point and does not speak of Solomon in his earthly character, is an indication that God would have us lose sight of the earthly Solomon, and look beneath the surface for the spiritual interpretation.

The authorship of the Song is not the thought that is made prominent in the first verse; but the expression, "pertaining to Solomon," points our vision to the great Prince of Peace. The wording of the verse conveys a hint, that the book is more than a series of love songs written to commemorate the marriage of an earthly king.

The name, "Solomon," means "peaceful," or "prince of peace;" and God ordained that Solomon's reign of peace and plenty, should foreshadow the reign of Him who is the true and the only Prince of Peace.

The name, "Solomon," as used in this book of the Bible, is not a mere type of Jesus Christ in the same sense as the earthly kings, Solomon, David, and others in the Old Testament, were types of the Messiah. The meaning here is not figurative, but literal.

It was through Christ and His death on the cross, that peace was brought to the earth. His name was called "Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." His name is called Prince of Peace because He is our Peace; for He came and preached peace to them that were afar off, and peace to them that were nigh.

God dropped these songs down into the heart of the earthly Solomon; and of the one thousand and five songs which he wrote, only these five, comprising the Song of Solomon, have been preserved and have found a place in the Holy Scriptures. Just as the "Holy of holies" was the Holiest place of all, just as the "Heaven of the heavens" is the highest Heaven of all, so the "Song of songs" is above and beyond all the songs that have ever come from human heart and human lips. This is the Song that is above all other songs; a Song sent down from the courts of Heaven, from the throne of God; a strain from the Heavenly choir.

This is the ineffable, preëminent Song; ineffable because it is of the ineffable love and relation between Christ and His bride. Preëminent because it is of Him who is "The Head of the body, the church;" because it is of Him, "Who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things He might have the preëminence. For it was

the good pleasure of the Father that in Him should all the fullness dwell." It is a strain from the eternal Song which we shall sing of our Beloved in the ages to come, as we realize more fully how He loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood; and as we apprehend what God has done for us through Him, and what He is to us.

No other song can compare with this Song that tells of the slain Lamb, that portrays His slain bride. Although it speaks only of the Prince of Peace, or Solomon, in this first verse, and the bride is not named; we see a deep significance in this silence. The church is the body of Christ, who is our Prince of Peace; and when we are told that this Song is concerning Solomon, it must include those who are His body. There is more in this book about the bride, than concerning the Bridegroom; and it is she who does most of the speaking. If we would join in the Song of Moses and the Lamb, we must have our hearts and voices attuned to Heaven while we are still upon earth. We cannot use our voices unworthily, lending them to unholy, fleshly words, and hope they will be prepared to give forth heavenly melody around the throne of God.

Are our voices kept for Him alone? Do we refuse every word that would dishonor His Name? Are we speaking the language of Heaven and keeping our voices so exclusively for communion with Him and singing His praises, that all huskiness and sharpness are gone?

Even while in the body of our humiliation must our voices be consecrated to the worship of God. Every harsh word, every cutting word, every deceitful, flattering word, every murmuring, complaining, selfish sound will leave the impress upon our voices, and make them weak, unmusical, uncertain in sounding forth the praises of our God and of His Christ. But as our voices go up in praise

and thanksgiving, in love and worship, all the sharp, cutting notes will die away, until our voices will partake of the music of that voice which is as the sound of many waters. Then, when He calls upon us, we can join in this Song of the Blood-washed virgins.

Do our voices have a touch of heavenly music in them now? Does the sound of our words savor of Christ, and point to the heavenly country of which we are citizens? Have we the language of Heaven and are we putting away the language of the earth and of our flesh? If we are doing this and hastening after our Lord, taking up our cross daily to walk after Him, our hearts will open up to the Song of Solomon; and we shall know that it is the Song of our Beloved.

1:2. **"Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth."** When the bride is near the Lord and longing to have greater access to Him, she forgets to mention the name of the One for whom she is longing. It is a significant fact, that throughout the Song of Solomon, the bride never mentions the name of her Bridegroom; but describes Him as her Beloved or the One whom her soul loveth; she speaks of Him as though there were none other but He on earth.

It is when she has drawn near enough for Him to be her whole thought and the only One on earth to her, that she speaks of Him thus. He is the first, the last, the only One in her heart and thoughts; and she is unconscious that she has not mentioned His name. Those who love, unconsciously assume that all others must know and see the beauty and preëminence of the one who fills their own lives and thoughts. The bride's words reveal that the Bridegroom is not with her visibly, yet He is not far off; He is absent and yet He is near.

Historically, this portrays the longing of the Jews for their Messiah. For centuries, the faithful remnant of God's Ancient

People had looked and longed for the coming of their Messiah; they had searched the Scriptures, their cries had gone up to God. Most of the Jews knew the prophecies concerning their Messiah; but when He came to His own, they knew Him not, they received Him not. In the Psalms, and in other portions of the Old Testament, the longing for the first advent of the Messiah, and for the deliverance which He was to bring to His people, is like a heart-cry. This heart-cry has never ceased, but has come down through the ages, finding response in God's people; and it is going forth again from the hearts of those who are looking and longing for Christ's Second Coming.

The Jews had had the prophecies concerning His coming, they had had the temple worship and the law through Moses. God spoke to the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners (Heb. 1:1), but all of this did not satisfy their hearts. Only God could satisfy their hearts; only He, of whom the prophets spake, could fill that void which God had left within them to be filled by Himself alone. They were looking eagerly, yearningly, for "The sun of righteousness to arise with healing in its wings," they were waiting for Him to come who should redeem Israel. Their cry was, "Let me not only hear about Him, but let Him come near Himself! Let me behold Him! Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth."

This is also the heart-cry of the soul who would receive the kiss of reconciliation, which only the Son can give. The meaning, however, which finds a deep response in the hearts of those who have already met the Prince of Peace, and who have accepted Him as their Saviour, is the expression of that deep longing for a closer touch with the Lord.

The bride knows that He is near her, but He is unseen; there is not the close intimacy into which she would enter. She longs for the kiss of love and communion, which comes after the kiss of reconciliation and peace. She longs to enter

into the closer relation that He is offering her; to be in the place where she will behold the King in His beauty; where she will abide in His presence continually. She desires that all shall be wrought upon her that must be done, to make her a worthy bride of a Heavenly Bridegroom. So her heart cries out with eager yearning: "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth."

How our hearts have cried to the Lord that we might approach Him and enter into such fellowship, such humility, as would constrain us to abide continually at His feet!

It is precious to have received the kiss of reconciliation and to know that the Son is not angry, neither shall we perish by the way (Ps. 2:12); but there is another longing in the hearts of those who are girding up their loins and pressing on to go through with Jesus. This longing is for the kiss of betrothal, which will bring us nigh unto Him in a deeper way, in a closer relation. Do you know what separation it means? There can be no flirting with the world, there can be no dallying with the flesh; both the flesh and the world must be put away. This relation between Christ and His bride is going to begin down here on earth, and will reach perfection in the overcomers.

How many, who have been redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb, are satisfied with little more than nothing. How many are satisfied with themselves and their attainments; but God is not satisfied with them when they are walking beneath the light He has given them. Let us not be satisfied with any place or attainments with which He will not be satisfied.

With certain foreign nations, it is customary to kiss their own hands when they meet their intimate friends, instead of kissing one another upon the lips, as is the custom with us. How many of God's people are following after manifestations, visions, revelations and new sensations that are of the flesh; in the place of longing for a greater revelation of Christ and His

love. This attitude can well be symbolized by "kissing their own hands."

The "kisses of the mouth," is the symbol of the close relation that is between a bride and a bridegroom. There may be kisses upon the hand, signifying respect and friendship; but the mouth is kept by the bride for the bridegroom, and the bridegroom keeps these kisses for his bride. Here it is a token of the highest, closest communion and relation that one can have with the Lord. She is longing for the kiss of betrothal, which will be an earnest from Him that she is to be His bride. Who can tell the joy of those who approach close enough to receive this kiss, which is the seal of the closer relation with the Lord!

"For Thy love is better than wine." Literally: "Thy love tokens," or "Thy caresses." In this place, the word, "love," means the continual proofs and tokens of His love, which are said to be better than wine. Wine is a figure of prosperity and of all good and desirable things. The wine from the grape exhilarates and gives strength, but it only strengthens for a time; while the love of Christ is better than all earthly good, and gives divine strength that abides. It is not only the love that He had to usward when He came and died for us; not only the love that He has for those whom He has redeemed; but that enjoyment of His love, which each of those may have who have felt His kiss of reconciliation.

It is entering into deep communion with Him; it is lying at His feet during those moments that are spent alone with Him: it is the consciousness of being well-pleasing to Him and having His love upon us: it is the holy familiarity with which we pour out our own love at His feet, and tell Him all things concerning ourselves. It is at such times that our enraptured souls cry: "Thy love is better than wine!"

No earthly good can allure the one who has pressed close to the side of her Beloved, and has tasted and found that the

Lord is good. All the joy and delight, all the pleasures a thousand worlds could offer, are as dust in the balance when weighed against one hour of this mutual exchange of love and communion with the Lord. Nothing counts with those who have found by a continual abiding in the presence of the Lord, that His love is more excellent than all delights and joys that earth can offer. It is as we travel through this wilderness that we must experience the sweetness of His love. Though we have not beheld Him with our physical eyes, we have beheld Him by faith with our spiritual eyes; and we have entered into His presence and have drawn close enough to Him to begin to delight in His eternal love.

We feel His love enveloping and moving within us; we experience His drawing with cords of love; and His love puts new courage and boldness within our hearts as we enter into, and yield to it more fully day by day. Our prayers go up more fervently that we may apprehend with all the saints, "What is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." We wonder at the depth of His love, which could reach down and snatch poor sin-cursed man from the edge of the pit, which could lift this man from such a depth and seat him upon the throne of Jesus Christ. We rejoice in the love, which is so long and broad, that it can lift redeemed humanity and give them life everlasting.

God's only purpose in strengthening us with His Spirit in the inward man is that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith; to the end, that we may know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge and be filled unto all the fullness of God. We are like little earthworms, when God would have us cast off the earthy and unworthy, and soar up into the atmosphere of His presence. He would have us get our eyes upon the heavenly, and see the unseen and eternal. He would have us face the light until our eyes become piercing and strong to

endure His greatest light. He would have us breathe the air of the heavenly, of the divine presence until we can breathe the rarest, purest air that is found above the world.

The love of God changeth not; and, from the time we are born again, is upon us with the same warmth and power; but it is a different thing for us to enter into it. It is not that the love of Christ increases, for with Him is no variableness. We have proved that our whole beings are invigorated by entering into and abiding in His love. It is here that our poor, puny love begins to grow and to be perfected. "We love, because He first loved us." We could no more love the Lord if His love had not first been given us, than a plant can grow and blossom without the gracious warmth and rays of the sun. It is only because He first loved us, that one spark of divine love can be kindled in these cold, dead hearts of ours. As the wine from the grape exhilarates the body, so does the love of Christ uplift and pour life and strength into the soul.

Even here on earth, the bride of the Lamb has her cup filled to overflowing with the New Wine of the Kingdom, with the joy of deep, hidden communion with her Beloved, whom not having seen she loves. What then will it be when she is at home in her Father's house, when she is forever with her Lord! Come quickly, Lord Jesus!

1:3. **"Thine oils have a goodly fragrance; Thy name is as oil poured forth."** The very name, "Christ," means the "Anointed One." When the wise men came from a far country to search for the Messiah, they brought to Him gold, frankincense and myrrh. It did not just *happen* that the wise men brought these gifts to Him. Nothing ever *happens;* for our God is over all things. They brought to Him the gold, which symbolizes His divinity; they brought to Him the frankincense, which is an emblem of His glory and fragrance, together with the praise toward God which came through Him. They

brought to Him the fragrant, but bitter myrrh, which is a symbol of His fragrance, and of the bitterness and suffering through which He would pass. Those who brought these gifts saw no significance in them; but the meaning is very clear to one who sees the symbolism in the metals, the sweet spices and gums which were used in the Jewish worship.

Twice, during His life on earth, the virgins of the bride anointed Him with costly oils, emblems of the fragrance, preciousness and perfections of His character and attributes, and also the anointing of the Holy Spirit. The first to thus anoint Him near the beginning of His ministry, was the one to whom He had forgiven much because she had sinned much. The other virgin who anointed Him was Mary of Bethany, who sat at His feet and listened to His words; this was near the end of His ministry, an anointing for His burial.

It is when we have sinned much, when we realize our great need of a Saviour because we have much to be forgiven, that we partake of His attributes through faith in His great work upon Calvary; and we pour out upon our Lord's feet this oil which He has first given us. It is when we cling to a place low at His feet and hearken unto His words, that we gather His fragrant oils in our alabaster boxes. It is when He has broken the alabaster box, that the oil is poured out upon His feet. Broken and contrite means broken and powdered, made so small it can never again come together in its first shape. The more broken and contrite the heart and spirit become, the more abundantly are the fragrant oils spilled at His feet.

If we could look into our own hearts, we would be dismayed at the small, weak love we have for Jesus Christ. We do not love Him more because we have not sought Him diligently, we have not walked close to Him, we have not dwelt in His presence continuously enough to feed the flame of love, which He has planted in our bosoms.

Many of God's children come to God when they want something, and pray when they need something; but this is the least, and the subordinate relation which should be between Jesus Christ and His redeemed ones. We should seek Him because we love Him and talk with Him because of His preciousness to us. We should listen to His voice because we are learning to love it more than all other voices. We should be in a relation where we are not continually saying, "Lord, give me this," or, "Do that for me;" but where our hearts are evermore crying: "Kiss me with the kisses of Thy mouth." "Jesus, reveal Thyself and Thy love to me more fully and help me to love Thee more fervently." We should have such hunger for Him that, though we are bringing to Him our needs and prevailing for other things along other lines, the heart-cry for a deeper revelation of His love and Himself would never cease.

We hardly realize how ill-smelling our own attributes are, and how many flies have gotten into the oil which the great Perfumer has commenced to put within us, until we have drawn close enough to Him to discern the fragrance of His pure oils. It is when we smell the goodly fragrance of His humility, that we begin to detect the offensive odor of our pride. It is when the sweetness of His purity and holiness, His submission to God's will, His love and longsuffering, breaks in upon us, that we smell the vile odors of our flesh, our stiff-neckedness and willfulness, our lack of love and our short-suffering. It is when we remember the perfume of His patience and forgiveness toward us, when we have come back to His feet after going aside in disobedience, and dishonoring Him, that we get the real offensive odor of our impatience and unforgiving spirit toward one another.

It is always the odor of His attributes that we need the most, which smells the sweetest, and which we desire the most ardently; those that are the opposite of our weak places. If

we are beset with pride, no attribute of Jesus appears so beautiful as His humility. We think it is the loveliest and most desirable because we need it most. And so it is with every other need in our lives.

"Thine oils have a goodly fragrance;" and as we say this to Him, we hear Him say: "Mine oils are thine; and I would have this fragrance ever upon thee that others, through thee, may know that Mine oils have a goodly fragrance. My garments smell of myrrh, aloes and cassia, and I would have all thy garments smell of myrrh, aloes and cassia."

"Thy name is as oil poured forth." He is the source and fountain of all the fragrance in heaven and upon earth. Not only do His oils have a goodly fragrance, but He was the Christ, or "The Anointed One," of God. Mary broke the alabaster box and poured the precious oil upon the Lord's feet, the fragrance filling the whole house. And He said: "She hath done what she could; she hath anointed My body beforehand for My burial." Thus it was when the alabaster box of His body, which contained this precious perfume, was broken; the oil and fragrance flowed out, filling Heaven and earth. It was when His body was broken, when His flesh was rent, that Heaven's perfume came down to earth.

He opened up a new and living way into the Holy of holies, pouring out His life a ransom for many; and the fragrance from the redemption which He brought to mankind, ascended unto the Father. When He shed His Blood, a Fountain was opened to the house of David for uncleanness and for sin; and though the Jews, as a nation, have not yet been brought nigh to this Fountain, the Gentile church has washed in it and proven it.

It is when He said: "It is finished," that the perfume ascended unto God; and there commenced to ascend from Calvary the continual incense, symbolized by the continual incense that was burned before God in the Jewish temple. It

is He who pours out the Holy Spirit, with all His workings and blessed indwelling, upon those who have first been cleansed by the blood.

"Therefore do the virgins love Thee." The word "virgins" means the pure in heart, and the same word is translated in Ps. 83:3, "Thy hidden ones." Only as the Holy Spirit reveals to us the Christ, and the Christ reveals to us the Father, is our love drawn Godward. "Therefore;" because the odor of His oils is beginning to steal over us; because we begin to fathom a little His great love, and what it meant for His life to be poured out that His Name might be as oil poured forth; because of all this does our love increase and burn more brightly. Only as we behold Christ do we love Him, and none but the pure in heart see Him. It is when our robes are spotless, that we can draw close to Him; for none but the "Virgins" follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, and the "Virgins" are they who love the Bridegroom.

It is not to those who are defiled, who have never come to the Fountain and been washed from their sins, that His Name is as oil poured forth. Their hearts do not leap with love and devotion at the very mention of His precious Name, for they know Him not and love Him not. No! It is to those who have seen their vileness and have turned to Him, through whom, alone, their stains can be washed away; it is to those who have seen Him hanging upon the cross, that His Name is as oil poured forth. It is to those who are no longer sin-stained, defiled, rebels against God; to those who have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb, that His Name is as oil poured forth. It is to the virgins who will make up His bride and sit with Him upon His throne; to those who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth; to those who love Him, that His Name is as oil poured forth. It is His precious perfume that feeds and increases the love of the bride.

When the high priest, who, with the holy anointing oil upon him, had been ministering before God in the Holy of holies, came out and passed among the congregation of Israel, the fragrance of that holy oil enveloped him. No oil like unto this could be made by any man or be put upon any flesh; it could be only upon those who ministered before God, and only upon them did this holy perfume linger and ascend before God. So with those who draw close to their Mercy seat, Christ, and minister before Him; His oils are upon them, His likeness and fragrance surround and emanate from them; and all who come near know that they have been abiding in the presence of the Lord.

Do you long to be fragrant, dear child of God? Hasten to Him whose oils have a goodly fragrance; call upon Him whose Name is as oil poured forth; put off all the attributes and weaknesses of self, and put Him on. Put Him on! Clothe thyself in Him, let God forevermore hide thee away in Him. Then shall those about thee smell such fragrance as has never before been discerned upon thee; and they shall know that His oils have a goodly fragrance, and that His oils are upon thee.

CHAPTER III

THE DIVINE DRAWING INTO THE KING'S CHAMBERS. 1:4.

1:4. **"Draw me and we will run after Thee."** When the bride has commenced to smell His oils, she is filled with a greater hunger and she cries, "draw me and we will run after Thee." The bride knows that her Lord is not far off, though she does not see Him; and her heart goes out that she may rise up and run after Him faster than she has ever done. She feels she is helpless in herself, but that He has power to draw her, and He alone can do this. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." "No man can come to Me except the Father that sent Me draw him."

Already has she been drawn unto Him in deeper hunger; already has she longed for the kisses of His mouth, those tender moments of communion and prayer, which reveal His love. Already has she smelled the sweet odors of His oils; already has she beheld Him upon the cross for her, she has beheld His life poured out for her. This but increases her desire to be drawn with greater power, with stronger cords of love, with greater call to separation, and even with greater suffering, that she may arise and run after Him. She is more and more realizing her helplessness to run unless He draws her.

She would have every band that binds her, cut and cast aside; she would have every weight or earthly attraction that holds her down, forever swept away by the voice of her Beloved. Her heart's cry and prayer are that her Lord will draw

her aside unto Himself in greater separation; that He will lay hold upon her by His mighty power, and draw her until with ever-increasing speed, she runs after Him, and runs clinging to Him.

Each one of the virgins who make up the bride, must be drawn by God's personal dealing and working in the soul; and as each one yields to God's drawing, they will all find themselves in the midst of those who are following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. Not all who profess the Name of Christ, cry to God to draw them that they may run after Him. Many stop running when the first stone cuts their feet; when the first weariness seizes them; when the first separation from loved ones comes; when the first persecution arises, or when their names are cast out as evil.

But the few who are chosen from the many who are called, will only cry to God the louder as they nearly faint with weariness, as their feet are cut and bleeding by the stones along the path. These are they who will pray the more fervently for the Lord to draw them that they may run after Him the faster, as they see those who have loved them dropping away, as they suffer persecution and hear their names evil spoken of.

As the bride feels the approach of her Lord, her feet are made like hinds' feet to run and meet Him. As she hears His voice calling to her to come aside with Him a while and rest, her heart is drawn with cords of love, and her soul pants for Him as the hart pants after the water brooks. She hastens to obey and come aside that He may speak to her more intimately; though it is in chiding or reproof, His reproofs are sweeter to her soul than the flattery of all others.

She not only hastens toward her Lord as He comes to meet her, as He sheds about her the fragrance of His presence; but when He seems to withdraw, she runs the faster that she may overtake Him. When "He makes as though He would go further," she presses after Him and constrains Him to

come in and sup with her, and she with Him. Her hunger goes out to Him, and she cries with the psalmist (Ps. 63:8): "My soul follows hard after Thee (Literally: "Runs clinging to Thee"), Thy right hand upholds me." When her Lord would withdraw, like Jacob, she will not let Him go; she clings to Him in prayer and communion, in obedience and separation, in devotion and worship; she clings to Him until He blesses her.

She runs faster and faster clinging to Him; hardly knowing that it is because His right hand is upholding her that she goes so swiftly; that she is able to cling to Him and not fall. As long as she clings to Him, He clings to her: "Jehovah is with you, while ye are with Him; and if ye seek Him, He will be found of you." Many times, it seems as though she is doing all the clinging and all the running herself; but it is because He is upholding her by the right hand of His righteousness, that she is able to run and not weary, to walk and not faint.

The Word reads: "Draw *me* and *we* will run after thee." The drawing of God is upon each virgin who will make up the bride; His hand is cutting and shaping each living stone for the habitation in the Spirit, which He is building for Himself. It is as each soul is drawn, that all run after Him; it is as He perfects each one, that all come forth in perfection, it is as each one is put into His purifying fires, that the gold in each life comes out pure and shining, and the glory of God shines out from the whole.

When our hearts are towards our Heavenly Bridegroom, there is a hunger in our souls and a going out within us that He will draw us and cause us to approach closer to Him. We are not satisfied with the place to which we have attained, and with the hunger which we have. It is when His drawing is upon us, that our hearts cry out with the greatest yearning for His drawing to increase; and nothing, no one, counts but Him.

Not only does He draw us through the yearning and

hunger which He puts within our hearts; but through chastenings and testings, through hard things does He draw us. The sheep that is being whipped always presses closer and closer to the shepherd's side. The child of God whose heart is set on Him, always presses closer to God when he feels His chastening rod; and it is this chastening rod, when yielded to, that comforts us in the end. How often we pray for God to draw us closer to His side; but when He begins to chasten us, and we come into testings and hard things, we do not recognize that He is answering our prayer and drawing us.

We little realize that mighty unseen power that is drawing, drawing, drawing us like an irresistible, supernatural magnet. We speak of our hunger for the Lord, we tell of the longing that we feel for Him, we pour out our hunger and longing at His feet as though He did not know they were in our hearts. We comprehend but little that all this is the drawing of God; that if He did not graciously put the hunger in our hearts, we should be cold and barren; we should be satisfied with but little of that into which He is constraining us to enter.

Let this sink down into our hearts and ever abide there, that every heavenward impulse in our souls, every upward desire, is the drawing of God. No sinner could be saved if God did not convict, deal with, and draw him. So many times we lose sight of this. We could not desire His will nor His best, we could not love and hunger for our dear Lord if God did not graciously put within us a hunger for Him and His will.

Dear child of God, if you feel the drawing of God in your soul, cherish it as you would cherish a great treasure. If you feel a deeper hunger, if you are entering into a closer walk with Him, do not look upon it carelessly, nor treat it lightly. If you do not feel the divine drawing and hunger for God, cry to Him that He will give it to you; and ever remember that the desire for hunger is the beginning of hunger, and that you cannot feed upon Jesus Christ until you are spiritually hungry.

In the natural, if the stomach is in poor condition, the best food is loathsome. So it is with spiritual food and feeding upon Jesus Christ; if we are not living near God and are not where we should be, we neither have an appetite for spiritual things, nor can we feed upon Christ who is the living Bread. When God pours into you a hunger for your Beloved and begins to reveal more clearly your privileges in Him, rejoice with great joy and gratitude toward God. If He did not put into our hearts the longing to know Him better and to have His very best, we would be satisfied with the least we could have and be saved, and perhaps lose our salvation altogether.

How wondrous are the workings and drawings of God upon a human soul! How little do we behold or know that which He is doing, as day by day He works down in the depths of our beings. The most favored place a child of God can be in, is to continually feel the drawing of God urging and constraining him to greater hunger and to greater abandonment to Him. There is nothing we should praise Him for with such gratitude, as for every touch of hunger that He graciously gives us. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God; how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past tracing out."

Our Beloved is calling us to gird up our loins more firmly, to cling to Him more prayerfully and continuously. He is calling upon us to run faster, faster; to believe that if we will not let go of Him, He will lift us over all the hard places, and make of all the stumbling blocks, steps upward and heavenward on our homeward journey. As long as we cling to Him, His hand upholds us and keeps our feet from falling or even stumbling.

"The King hath brought me into His chambers." The King brings us in. We cannot bring ourselves into the smallest of the King's chambers; for we do not know the preparation required, nor the testings necessary to perfect such prepara-

tion. Only the Lord knows when we are ready for an advance step; for every onward step means greater suffering. The bride's prayer for a stronger drawing of God, is not because He has not brought her into any of His chambers, for He has. As a result of the longings which have just been poured out at His feet, she has entered into a further chamber. She does not say, "The King has brought me into *His chamber*," but, "into His *chambers*." The plural of the word, chambers, holds out such vistas of the inexhaustible revelations of God, and closer approaches to God, that we hear the Spirit speaking in our hearts: "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

The chamber of Salvation is the first chamber, which must be entered before a soul can go on into those wonderful chambers of the King, which are prepared for those who love God. The door into this chamber is Christ. "I am the door of the sheep." There is no other door, for there is no other name given under heaven whereby men can be saved.

The next chamber into which our newly acknowledged Lord and Master leads us, is the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. No tongue can express the joy of these first two chambers; nor the praise and happiness with which our hearts overflow as we pass through the door, Christ, and find the peace of God flooding our souls. No words can express our peace and joy when we feel all the condemnation, with which we have been tormented, taken away; and in its place we hear the voice of God saying: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

As soon as we are new creatures in Christ Jesus, and have come into Him and He has come into us, He leads us into the next chamber of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. This is not, as many think, taking something by faith and going on; neither is it merely getting blessed; nor is it an influence. It is the com-

ing in of a Person, the Holy Spirit, who is the Third Person of the Trinity; it is receiving Him according to the Scriptures, and in the same way in which the saints received Him in the apostolic days. The baptism in the Holy Spirit has always been, and will always be received in the same way, from the first outpouring on the day of Pentecost to the end of this dispensation.

When we have entered these first two chambers, so great is our joy and so wonderful is the presence and power of God with us, that we feel we must have come into possession of all God could have for us. But our Lord does not let us be satisfied and rest here; and those who do this fail God and never get His best. As soon as our first rejoicing is over, the Spirit, who is abiding within, begins to stir us up and to reveal to us our Lord Jesus Christ in new light and beauty. He speaks to us and tells us: "Whom God foreknew He also foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29).

We begin to see that God did not save us only that we might be filled with joy and go shouting and rejoicing up to Glory. His supreme purpose was, that we might be conformed to the image of His Son; and the Spirit gently points out to us the lack in our resemblance to our Solomon, the Prince of Peace. Then our Lord calls us to enter into the chamber of Humility, through which we must pass before we can put on the attributes of our dear Lord, or go from chamber to chamber into those things which God has prepared for them that love Him. Many of God's children never go beyond the first chamber, and in the end are saved as by fire. Others enter into the second chamber of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit and do not see the need of going on unto perfection.

There is a place that one must enter before every onward step; a hidden place of meeting with the Lord, which is de-

scribed in the sixth chapter of Matthew as the "Inner chamber." It is that place within our beings where our Lord ever dwells, where we go in and shut the door; where we meet Him alone in communion, prayer, contrition, and fellowship. It is in this secret closet of prayer and communion, that we find grace to pass through the lowly door which leads into the chamber of Humility. Many never enter into this place of humility. They see that the door is very small, and very low; they must stoop so low to pass through it into this next chamber, that they turn back and will not enter that way.

They try to find some other way to go on, some other entrance into that which the Lord has for them; but only that low door appears; and to pass through it they see they must surely stoop very low; and, perchance, lie down in the dust and creep through into the chamber of Humility. Sometimes the Lord sees that they really desire to go on, although they do not know how to humble themselves; and in His love and mercy, He brings them down by some dealing or affliction. Then, when they are lying low in the dust, they hear His voice calling them to follow Him; and low at His feet, clinging in despair to Him, they go through into this precious chamber of Humility.

From this place are the entrances into all else that God has for us; from here we go on into the ever-increasing transfiguration into the image of Christ. This chamber leads into the clearer revelation of our Lord, into all the experiences that He holds out to those who will pay the price. We go into the chamber of unbroken communion, into the chamber of entering into fellowship with Him in His sufferings. We enter the chamber of hiding away in Him from the strife of tongues, unmoved by all the winds and tempests that come against us; we abundantly enter into the chamber of endurance, becoming strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. All the great and small, the highest and least experiences that God has for us, are entered through humility.

And we find that the chamber of Humility itself is really the High and Holy place of God. "Thus, saith the high and lofty One who inhabiteth Eternity, whose Name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, to revive the heart of the contrite" (Isa. 57:15).

Reader, do you see how God, by coming and dwelling with them, exalteth those who humble themselves? Are you longing for a continual consciousness of His presence? Then must you pass through that lowly door into the chamber of Humility, and there must you evermore abide. There you will find your Beloved waiting to reveal Himself to you more clearly; waiting to take up His abode with you more intimately; waiting to lead you into every chamber of His treasure house, and to lead you on from faith to faith, from victory to victory, from glory to glory.

"We will be glad and rejoice in Thee; we will make mention of Thy love more than of wine: rightly do they love Thee." It is when the King has begun to lead the bride into His precious chambers, that she says: "We will be glad and rejoice in Thee." There was a time when she rejoiced in that which He was doing for her; when she sought the experiences, looking upon them and rejoicing in them. But when she has passed a little further into the chambers of the King, love for Him fills her heart and rises up within her like mighty, increasing fountains. She no longer looks upon what He is doing as being the object of her search; she loses sight of all experiences as apart from Him. By faith her eyes are fastened more continually upon Him, and she is glad and rejoices in HIM.

How many times we grieve the heart of our dear Lord because we do not make Him the supreme source and object of our joy and gladness. There are times when we are full of joy and gladness, and our lips are praising Him with a loud

voice, that we think we are glad and rejoicing in Him; when we are really glad and rejoicing in our surroundings or in circumstances, or in His blessings and gifts. But if, in His wisdom, He sweeps away the conditions that have given rise to this joy, we find we are cast down and overwhelmed, often unto despair. We must remember His benefits, but be glad in HIM. We must make mention of His wonderful acts to the children of men, but rejoice in HIM. We must eat and be filled when He breaks the bread to us in desert places; and multiplies the meat until many basketfuls may be gathered up that have overflowed from His bounty. But we must seek Him and Him alone; love Him and Him alone; be glad and rejoice in Him and Him alone, regardless of the loaves and fishes. Our hearts must so embrace Him, our love be so pure and unselfish, that our hearts will still be glad and rejoice in Him, though His benefits seem to be withdrawn; though His wonderful acts appear to cease; though we are in a dry and weary land where no water is, and the heavenly manna does not fall.

O precious Bridegroom of our souls, though Thou slayest us, yet will we trust Thee. Though Thou dost let our springs dry up, and dost withhold Thy benefits, Thou dost never take Thyself from the soul that obeys and loves Thee. In the darkness, we will walk in Thy light: in the desert, we will feed upon Thy love. We will rejoice that with Thee there is no variableness nor shadow which is cast by turning. Though circumstances change, Thou changest not. Though blessings fluctuate, Thou art the same yesterday, today and forever. Dear Lord, "We will be glad and rejoice in Thee."

"We will make mention of Thy love more than wine." Though He conceals Himself from the bride, He has been leading her on and has brought her to the place where she finds joy and comfort in remembering Him. She finds her solace in thinking of His love, which she will make mention of rather than anything that she has experienced or any earthly

good. All that can be given or desired of earthly good and benefit, which is represented by "wine," is forgotten as she is glad and rejoices in *Him,* and makes mention of *His love.* It is *His love* that has brought strength and uplift to her. It is *His shed Blood* that has delivered her and covers her.

He has loved her with an everlasting love. While she was yet a sinner, He loved her and died for her. While she was yet keeping the vineyard of the world, black, scorched with the sun, bent down and deformed by the yoke of bondage to sin, He planned to break that yoke that she might walk upright. He planned to cleanse away all blackness that she might be comely in His righteousness. How often He has forgiven her when she has not walked upright, and when she has lingered along the path instead of walking in obedience and hastening after Him. When she remembers all of these tokens of His great love, she would make mention of His love more than of all earthly good; and her heart cries out: "Thy gentleness has made me great."

There is no child of God that has set his face to go through with Him, who has not grieved over the weakness of his love for the Lord. Our hearts have mourned, and we have suffered when we have realized our selfishness and mixed motives, the weak, unstable love we have for Him. Truly, none of us can rejoice in *our* love for Him. But when we begin to apprehend His great, eternal love for us, our hearts are filled with joy. And we praise Him for His love, His longsuffering and patience; and magnify His Name for that love which never fails. It is as we draw near to Him in communion and obedience, that we learn to know Him. It is as we keep His commandments, that our love increases and is perfected.

Those who do not know Him, cannot love Him; only those who have come to Him and know Him, can be glad and rejoice. Gladness is the inward joy and satisfaction; rejoicing is the outward expression of the inward condition. In the Revised

Version, we are told that "rightly do they love Thee." None of the redeemed who have had a revelation of Christ and of His great love to them, can do otherwise than love Him. If all the love God can put into the human race, could be multiplied by the ages of Eternity, it would be all too small to offer to Him who is the Lord of lords, and King of kings.

CHAPTER IV

THE BRIDE, BLACK IN HERSELF, BUT BEAUTIFUL IN HIM. 1:5, 6.

1:5, 6. **"I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. Look not upon me, because I am swarthy, because the sun hath scorched me. My mother's sons were incensed against me; they made me keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept."** It is not the sinner who says, "I am black;" it is not when the heart has been untouched by the grace of God, that the stain and blackness, which sin has brought upon the soul, can be seen by the one who is not saved. It is when the convicting power of the Holy Spirit strikes the sinner, that he sees his blackness; it is when he gets a vision of the spotless Lamb of God, that he sees himself as black as the tents of Kedar. But as he comes to the Cross of Calvary and finds forgiveness and cleansing, he becomes white through the Blood of Christ, although in himself he is as black as the tents of Kedar. His sins, which were as scarlet, are as white as snow; though they were red like crimson, they have become like wool.

When the bride has commenced to enter into a closer walk and touch with her Lord, the beauty which she thought she had, she sees wither up and drop off. The natural attractions in which she has rejoiced, disappear under the searching light of His holy presence. With clearer vision than ever before, she sees her own blackness and unworthiness in herself; and she knows that those who are beholding her and hearing of her love for Him, must see how unfit she is, as yet, to be His bride.

As she sees herself in this light, God makes her know that she must be brought under the control of the Spirit; she must live and walk in the Spirit. He shows her that all unworthy motives and desires, all words and actions that are not Christ-like, mar her beauty and must be put away if she would be a living epistle seen and read of all men. She has been telling the daughters of Jerusalem that He has taken her into His chambers, and her unworthiness stands out before her. She fears they must see that she is not like Him; that she is not yet perfected; that all the darkness of the natural, which the sun has left upon her, has not yet been taken away.

In her humility and consciousness of her own unworthiness, she declares that she is as black as the tents of Kedar. The dark skinned Arabs of the desert covered their tents with black goatskins, a fitting figure of the blackness of sin, which, in the unsaved, is within and without. These black tents are a striking contrast to the princely white tent of Solomon the Bridegroom. It is also a fitting expression of the feeling of unworthiness, which sweeps over every soul who, day by day, is drawing nearer to God.

When our hearts really draw near to the Lord, and we begin to breathe the pure air of His presence and to see light in His light, we see our own unworthiness; we hear our own words; we behold our actions; and, but for His sustaining hand, we should faint with dismay and distress. Words and actions, feelings and motives, which appeared worthy and harmless when we compared ourselves with ourselves, and measured ourselves by ourselves, stand out in all their imperfection and self-marred darkness. How vain is the self-complacency and confidence of him who has not had a vision of Christ, and a revelation of His high calling. How futile is the rejoicing and boasted victory of the one who has not entered the battles and contests, through which the overcomer is perfected. How puerile is the assumption of knowledge and attainment, in him

who has only viewed the land of promises and privileges from the mountain; and who has never walked up and down through the land.

But they who will make up the bride of the Lamb shall not be content with a vision of Christ. They will take away every veil that is between them and their Lord. And with unveiled face, they will behold His glory until they are transfigured into the same image, from glory to glory. The bride will not be satisfied with imaginary victory, which is really the deceptive peace of not entering in. She will strengthen herself in the Lord and put on His whole armor. She will fight the good fight and finish her course. She will not mistake the call and revelation of God, for possession. She will not be content with visions and passing glimpses of the land of promises, but by faith she will walk up and down through the land and begin to possess her possessions. She will become more than conqueror through Him who loved her.

The bride wonders how He can love her. She sees her lack of showing Him forth in His spotlessness and beauty. She feels the need of having the Father's hand mold her into symmetry and comeliness, and bring her into a more perfect likeness to her Lord. She feels her lack of perfection; she sees the wrinkles of the natural, marring her beauty; and she exclaims, "I am as black as the tents of Kedar!"

Then His worthiness comes before her; and God shows her she will never be anything but black in herself, she will never be anything but unworthy apart from Him. She remembers that God sees her in His Son and in Him she is white, in His worthiness she is worthy; and she exclaims, "I am comely as the curtains of Solomon." The Spirit continually urges her to put away everything that would bring reproach upon His name. He calls her to die daily that the life of Christ may be manifested in her mortal body.

There is a deep significance in the "curtains of Solomon,"

the least of which is the reference to the curtains of the royal tent of the earthly King Solomon. The precious reference is to the curtains of the Jewish Tabernacle, which were made of pure white linen. It was in the Jewish Tabernacle that Jehovah, the Heavenly Solomon, the real Prince of Peace, traveled in the midst of His Ancient People. His presence filled the Holy of holies: at times His presence filled the temple so that none could enter. He wrapped Himself in the cloud by day, He covered Himself with the pillar of fire by night. He rested upon the tabernacle when they were encamped; and when they journeyed, He went forward in the cloud and in the pillar of fire, with the Ark of the Covenant, to seek out a resting place for His people.

The pure white linen curtains, inwrought with the purple, blue, scarlet and gold, were emblems of Christ in His different aspects and attributes. His spotless humanity was symbolized by the white linen; and His divinity was symbolized by the gold which was worked over it. The blue showed forth His heavenly character, and the scarlet was a symbol of His suffering. The purple symbolized His royalty. He was a heavenly, suffering Saviour, and He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

Not only does the white linen show forth the spotlessness of the Bridegroom, but we are told in Rev. 19:8 that it has been given to the wife of the Lamb, "That she should array herself in fine linen, bright and pure; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints." The literal meaning of "bright and pure" is "radiant and pure." The word translated "bright" is from a word meaning "flaming torch." This is the wedding garment that has been prepared for the Lamb's wife. It is not only pure and holy, it is glorious, shining, radiant.

The bride of such a Bridegroom must be arrayed in the same spotless raiment, and have the same attributes of the heavenly, the suffering and the royal. Her robe must be pure

and bright, without blemish or wrinkle. It is through faith in His work on the cross, that, little by little, she puts on the wedding garment. It is through being identified with Him, that there is power to put off every adorning or raiment that is not of Him, and to put on His spotless garment of righteousness. He is made unto us righteousness; and it is really putting Him on for there is no righteousness apart from Him. Only when she is clothed in Him will she appear in His likeness.

How wonderful that, in Himself, He provides for us the wedding garment; and through the work which He did upon the cross, we are able to put it on; but we must do this day by day for it is not all done at once. The more we put Him on, the more we see our own blackness and uncomeliness in ourselves. We see ourselves more clearly in all our unworthiness as the life of Christ begins to be manifested, as we behold small portions of that bright, shining garment taking the place of the weakness and unloveliness of our own nature. And we give Him all the glory and rejoice that with Him all things are possible.

The "daughters of Jerusalem" represent those who are not among the virgins, but yet are not enemies; therefore, they may be won for Solomon if they do not see our blackness too plainly, and lose sight of the beauty of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. The bride entreats the daughters of Jerusalem that they will not look upon her blackness, nor see her apart from Solomon. How the consciousness of our shortcomings increases as we draw nearer to our blessed Lord. Surely, every one who looks at us, must see only our unworthiness! We long that they shall see Solomon, that they shall look only upon as much of His comeliness as is appearing upon us; that they shall not be blinded to His comeliness and beauty because they see our darkness and lack of beauty.

When we are living near God, we behold the beauty of our

Beloved more clearly; and there is a holy fear that through our weaknesses and failures, others will be turned aside and get a wrong conception of our Lord. It is a means of humiliation, and the way to a most precious place of humility down at His feet, when we reach the place where we can see our weakness and unloveliness apart from Him; and at the same time apprehend and appropriate His power and enabling at every step. We then begin to comprehend that all that has been done in us and for us, is through unmerited favor; and that the glory all belongs to Him who has wrought it. At the same time that we see ourselves as we would be apart from His imputed merit, He helps us to behold ourselves in Him; righteous and beautiful through our union with Him in the the work of His great Salvation.

It does us no good, but only discourages us if we see our failures and shortage and do not behold the beauty of Christ, and apprehend and experience our sufficiency in Him. On the other hand, if we see only what we are in Him and do not discern our defects; if we do not apprehend that which must be appropriated and worked out in us; if we do not see all that must be put off, and that Christ must be put on in actual control and manifestation, we become self-satisfied and puffed up.

"The sun has scorched me," which is the darkness that remains from the effects of exposure to the sun. We are new creatures in Christ Jesus as soon as we are saved; but through the control of sin, there are warped and weakened places left in our human nature and upon our members and faculties, which will hinder God in carrying out His plans in our lives. It is to these defects and wrinkles, we must die daily. The Holy Spirit, in the sixth verse, likens these defects to the tan that is left on the skin from exposure to the sun; and sunburn does not disappear as soon as exposure to the sun ceases. The defects and wrinkles, which have been left upon our human nature through being controlled by sin, and through tending

the vineyards of the world, do not disappear as soon as we become new creatures in Christ Jesus.

If this were so, we would be faultless at once, and there would be no necessity nor room for going on unto perfection. There would be no need of the cross, there could be no progress nor going from glory to glory. At the new birth, we become new creatures in Christ Jesus, and every faculty and member, every avenue of our beings, is delivered from the yoke of bondage and sin; and we begin to walk uprightly. Each faculty, member and power begins a Spiritward and Heavenward journey, traveling toward the place where they will all be brought under the control of the Spirit.

Her mother's sons were incensed against her, they made her keeper of the vineyards. The mother of the bride is Humanity, represented by Eve; and it is the mother's sons, the offspring of the human race, who have enticed, tempted, and made her keeper of the vineyards of the world. She did not remain in the place of obedience and purity where God first put her; and as she kept the vineyards of the world, the flesh, the devil, the sun of the world and sin beat down upon her. She forgot the vineyard of her own soul and beauty; it was neglected, overgrown with thorns, thistles, with noxious weeds; the soil was rocky and unfertile.

Not only the sinner neglects the vineyard of his life and soul; but how many times those who have been saved, do not keep the vineyards of their own souls and lives. Many who are called to have oversight over, and work in some part of the Great Vineyard of the Lord, become so taken up with their work, that they forget that the husbandman must first partake of the fruit. They forget that they cannot lift a soul higher than they have gone themselves, any more than a man can lift a heavy weight to a place above his head. They forget that it requires more constant vigilance and care to keep their own vineyards free from nettles, weeds, and stones; to keep the

fences up and the gate shut; to see that there may be an hundredfold of fruit for the Master, than it does to keep the portion of the Great Vineyard that has been entrusted to them by the Lord.

He, whom the Lord cannot trust with the faithful care of his own vineyard, will not be trusted with the tending of God's Vineyard of living, immortal souls. How shall we face the Owner of the Vineyard, if we have neglected our own lives; if we have not entered into that which God has shown us; if we must say, when He asks us about the lack of fruit and the neglect which is so evident: "Lord, I was so busy tending THY VINEYARD, that MY OWN VINEYARD I have not kept."

CHAPTER V

LONGING FOR COMMUNION WITH THE BRIDEGROOM. 1:7, 8.

1:7. **"Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest Thy flock, where Thou makest it to rest at noon."** As she remembers the scorching sun, and the yoke of bondage which was upon her, and how He has broken the bars of the yoke that she may walk upright; she longs to find that rest beside still waters, which He has provided for those who believe and obey. As she meditates upon His drawing; and recalls the chambers into which she has already entered; and that which she has already received, her desire for His presence and for divine fellowship increases; her love goes out with more fervor, and there is deeper intensity in her prayer that she may know where to find Him.

He has kept Himself hidden away from her vision, although she can speak to Him and knows that He hears; but she longs to behold Him, she longs to draw nearer. She has not had the revelation of Him which, as the bride, she will have later; but God is putting within her the preparation and reaching out for this. With him who follows on unto the full fruition of God's plan, this love and desire toward Jesus Christ begin when he is a babe in the Lord; and increase to the full midday of revelation and entering in, at His Second Coming.

She is one of the virgins who will make up the bride of Christ, but she no longer speaks of the "virgins" who love Him; the time is past when she speaks of the bride impersonally. She can only feel the love that fills her own heart; and to her, it is as though she were the only one who loves Him. Is it not

so? How our souls go out to our precious Lord when we have drawn nearer to Him! It seems that He is ours alone, that we alone belong to Him; it is as though there were none other in the bride, as far as the longing and love which we feel toward Him, are concerned. Now the cry of our hearts is: "O Thou, whom my soul loveth."

All that the world or any creature can give, is as ashes to that hungry soul who is longing for a revelation of her Lord. Nothing else can satisfy, nothing else can bring peace and joy. All other love is as husks, to the love and companionship of God, and to the love which He draws from the heart that is yielded to Him. Truly has His Name become to the bride as oil poured forth; and her hunger for divine fellowship and communion has increased, so that she longs to be fed by Him, and Him alone. She would know where He is feeding His flock, that she may join that company which is close to Him; and, by faith, behold Him all the time.

It was that fervent love and abandonment that caused the bride to cry out: "I have suffered the loss of all things that I may know Christ, . . . that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, becoming conformed unto His death." And as this virgin neared the end, and the time of his departure came; he exultantly cried: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith."

It was this fervent love and longing in the breast of one of the virgins of the bride of the Lamb, which made her hasten, while it was yet dark, and go to His tomb; and when she found His body gone, she went and told Peter and John. Her heart was filled with love and anguish as she stood without the sepulchre weeping. She remembered how tenderly Jesus had defended and protected her when Simon stood by, scorning her, not only because she had been a sinner, but because she was a woman; despising her Lord because He let her approach

Him; because He let her wet His feet with her tears and wipe them with the hairs of her head; because He let her kiss and anoint them. To her, Jesus had forgiven much; to Him had her love gone out in consuming fervor.

And when the Lord appeared to her outside the tomb, and she mistook Him for the gardener, it was this fervent love that made her say: "Sir, if thou hast borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away." She did not remember that she was but a weak, despised woman; she did not stop to think whether she had strength to carry away His body or not. Her love was so great that, though mountains stood between her and her Lord, she would have tried to brush them aside that she might come unto Him, and bear away that precious body, pierced and bleeding; the body of Him who had spoken peace to her soul and brought to her purity and Heaven.

Jesus knew the love in her heart, and it was to her, He entrusted the first message to the brethren announcing His resurrection. He could have sent this message by Peter or John; for while Mary Magdalene was standing outside the sepulchre, they were near by looking into the empty tomb. It was not to them, He first appeared; but to this despised woman, who loved much because she had been forgiven much. It was not by the great Apostle Peter nor by that Apostle whom Jesus loved, that He sent to the brethren this first message of the Gospel, and of His Finished Work on Calvary. He sent it by this woman who loved much; this despised one who, through the darkness, came first to the tomb; and who was the first to find He had risen, and who announced it to Peter and John. It was to this one, whose heart's cry was: "O Thou, whom my soul loveth!"

How puny, how weak, how miserable at best, is our love for our dear Lord! Oh, that He would melt us down, that we might cry to Him with a voice that would go right up into

His heart: "'O Thou, whom my soul loveth,' tell me where Thou art feeding Thy flock, that I may ever keep step with Thee; and not be lingering over food that is dried, withered and untimely, even though it may once have been fresh. Guide me, that I may walk in every ray of light and continually feed uponThee who art the Bread of life; feed in trial and perplexity, in temptation and difficulty; that from Thee, who art my strength and my Redeemer, I may get the uplifting power for everything that comes into my life."

"Tell me where Thou feedest Thy flock," is the fervent cry in the heart of the bride. Her hunger and desire for Him have increased as she searches for, and follows after Him. He has not yet made Himself manifest to her; she talks with Him, but she cannot find Him; there is a veil between them. She cannot lay hold upon Him, nor does she seem to be able to overtake Him; at times she hears His voice, although she does most of the talking. She goes forward, but He is not there; and backward, but she cannot perceive Him; on the left hand, when He doth work, but she cannot behold Him; He hideth Himself on the right hand, that she cannot see Him (Job 23:8-9). Yet she hears Him whisper, "Ye shall seek Me and find Me, when ye shall search after Me with all your heart."

It is a wonderful, supernatural intercourse that the bride holds with her beloved Lord; He, unseen, yet hearing and speaking. Even the weakest child of God can talk with Christ; and, though he may hardly know the Lord's voice, the Lord hears his cry and answers. Some of the greatest things that come into our lives, come through our weakest cries; not weak from negligence, but because of our inability to do anything ourselves. He knows the way each one takes, He knows every heart-cry that goes out to Him. As we see others getting closer to Him and into a higher place than we are in, and we cry that He will bring us there too; He knows it all because He put it all within us.

It is not to the half-hearted that our precious Lord reveals Himself in sweet intimacy; it is when we seek after Him with all our hearts, that we find Him. It is not they who follow in an intermittent way, that find Him; but He finally reveals Himself to those who press on with unwavering love and determination; to those who obey, though it seems to lead to a greater separation from Him. The bride prays that He will open up to her the treasures of His Word; that He will teach her to feed upon the Hidden Manna. How her words reveal her helplessness to feed herself or find the place where He is feeding His flock. She would have Him not only lead her in the green pastures of His Word; she would not only feed in the company which is nearest Him, but she would be so close to Him that every moment her eyes may rest upon Him; so that when she has fed to the full and lies down to rest, He would be near her and fill her vision.

It is when the flock has fed to the full, that they lie down, but the shepherd is with them all the time. Thus would she have it continually in her life. When we have fed upon the living Word and upon the written Word so that faith has arisen in our hearts, we can lie down upon the Word in rest and confidence, knowing we are in the pasture of the Great Shepherd. As we lie down upon the promises of God, and hide away and feed upon Him who is the Bread of life, we shall find peace and rest to our souls.

She would feed in the green pastures, not only in the cool of the morn and at eve when the dew is upon the grass, but she longs for the rest that abides even in the hottest hour of the day, when the sun is beating down, and there is no breeze stirring. She would be so nourished and built up by heavenly manna, that the heat cannot make her faint, nor the storms dismay and make her afraid.

There is a relation that we can have with our Lord, in which we are hidden away and draw upon Him for all enabling

and for strength in every time of need. Not only this. There is a relation where He will cause us to lie down and rest when all is turmoil about us. Even in the worst testings and the hardest things that can come upon us, He is able to make us rest beside *still* waters. Though the sun's rays are hot, and, in ourselves, we would be overcome; He will hush our fears and cause us to rest. He will spread His wing over us, and in its shadow we shall rest. In the covert of His presence will He hide us from the plottings of men. He will keep us secretly in His pavilion from the strife of tongues, for He is our keeper. He is our shade upon our right hand, the sun shall not smite us by day nor the moon by night. He will keep our going out and our coming in. He will keep us from all evil, for He neither slumbers nor sleeps.

It is a good thing for us to lie down upon the Word, and let God bring back to us what we have heard. When we have fed as much as He wants us to, He makes us know that He would have us lie down and chew the cud of rich food, which He has helped us gather. When He takes one portion away, some other comes; and many times He brings the same word to us over and over, and each time we get more nourishment out of it than we did the first time we meditated upon it. It is very significant that the word, meditate, means "to chew the cud, to talk to one's self, to ruminate."

The smallest light I get out of any part of the Word of God, is that which I receive the first time I come to it in meditation; and every time I come to it afterward, I receive more and more light. God will open up a portion of His Word and give such sweet nourishment; and perhaps remind us of some other green pastures, through which we passed on our way to the one we are now in. Then He will lead us through that again; always giving in great abundance to the soul that will follow Him and feed where He leads and directs.

"Why should I be as one that is veiled beside the flocks

of Thy companions?" The bride looks upon those who have been chosen by Him to lead and feed part of His flock, and she can see that they have been in His company. She sees that they know Him, that they must enter into His presence as her heart longs to enter in; and she feels that she is as one that is veiled. This either signifies that she does not appear to know His voice, and thus does not appear to be a true sheep (for Christ says that His sheep shall know His voice); or that she is shut out, as by a veil, from close intimacy with Him.

Many times has she seen some of the virgins get their eyes off the Lord, through the shepherd whom the Lord had put over them; and she does not want to look nor listen to any one but to Him. How many times, those whom God has chosen to feed the flock, draw the sheep to themselves instead of guiding them to the Chief Shepherd. How many times, man takes the place of the Lord in the hearts and lives of those he is feeding. Therefore, the bride does not want the undershepherds to lead her; and when she does not yield to them, she appears as though she were a stranger, as though there were something between her and the Lord. There really is a veil hiding her Beloved from her vision, but not a veil caused by sin and disloyalty to Him.

How often there seems to be within our reach, a place of entrance into deeper communion and feeding upon the living Bread which came down out of Heaven; a place that our souls desire, yet a veil appears to cover our faces so that we cannot see our Lord clearly. There seem to be bands which hold us back from going through into this place of deeper vision and revelation.

1:8. **"If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents."** At last she hears His voice more clearly. "If thou knowest not." As though He

would say to her: "Have I been so long time with thee and dost thou not know Me? Thou shouldest know from the Word how to draw closer to Me. Thou shouldest know, but I do not chide thee for I have chosen thee. Because thou art My fair one, I will lead thee gently on when thou dost not know how to go. Therefore, if thou hast not yet found the way to those green pastures in which I feed My flock, if thou hast not yet found the still waters where I make them to lie down and rest, if a veil separates us and holds thee back from coming even to My side and abiding there, then: 'O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.'"

There is love in His voice, there is tenderness; yet His answer is a test for it is not that for which she has longed and asked. She has cried to Him that she might join the company of those who have drawn the nearest to Him. He bids her feed the little flock of kids, which He has entrusted to her, beside the tents of the under-shepherds whom He has made tenders of some of His sheep. She has asked that she might behold Him, that she might abide in His presence and lie down beside the still waters. He tells her to go her way forth by the footsteps of the flock. If she does not know where He is feeding His flock, she must look carefully and follow Him by the footsteps of those who have been following Him. She must lead the kids that are in her care, and come along the path over which the other sheep have passed as they have followed close to Him. As Paul says: "Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ" (I Cor. 11:1).

She must bring her little flock and feed them and feed herself beside the tents of those shepherds who have been with Him and learned of Him; those who have proved trustworthy, and whom He has set over the sheep; those whom He will use to feed her. The most important part of this little flock of kids, is made up of the members and faculties of her own body and

life. These must be fed and nourished in His own pasture and with His own food if they are to be to His glory. It also means the ministry, whether little or great, which He has given her for other souls.

He bids her take care of all He has entrusted to her; but to follow, follow, ever follow in the footsteps of the flock, if she would receive the answer to her prayer and come near Him. If, at this point, she fails to discern the narrow path made by His flock, or fails to obey and follow in that narrow path, she will never enter into the intimate relation described in the rest of the book. If she lets her time and attention be engrossed by feeding her powers and faculties in any pasture upon which she may chance; if she becomes uplifted and busy with any soul or souls to which God has given her a ministry; if she stands still instead of following on, she will never become one of that company that are following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.

She must hasten on after the flock that follow Him; she must see that every one in her flock of kids is with her in the same path; she must take the same care of the kids, that the under-shepherds take of the larger sheep. She must feed them beside the tents of His faithful shepherds. She must not despise those shepherds who are chosen by Him and are faithful; for they are dear to His heart and suffer many things for His sake.

Already she has been drawn and has gone into some of His chambers; and she can lead and minister to those who have not been drawn, and with whom the Lord is just beginning to work. She can minister to those who have only entered the first chamber of Salvation, and who do not know of the second chamber of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit; who do not know that there are many chambers beyond these two. Already she has smelled His oils and tasted the New Wine of the Kingdom; she has had a revelation of His beauty and

her unworthiness, of His suffering and her need. Into these experiences, she can lead other souls who have not tasted and seen that the Lord is good.

But she must be sure and lead them along that path over which His faithful under-shepherds and true sheep have gone; she must feed them beside the tents of "His companions." She must not take them to strange pastures, nor can she hunt out fields according to her own whims. She can take no responsibility, but must always have it before her that she must give an account of her own faculties and members, and how she has used them. She is responsible to the Chief Shepherd for any souls He entrusts to her care. They are not *her* sheep, they are *His* sheep. She must not draw them to herself, but lead them on into His presence. He must increase, but she must decrease.

Though His voice is heard, and the answer is not that for which she asked, her heart rejoices that He calls her the "fairest among women." She has told of her blackness, of her swarthiness; she has seen her darkness, which has been more apparent as she beheld the white, spotless curtains of Solomon. but He, the One whom her soul loveth, the One who is becoming her all and in all, *He* has called her the "fairest among women." She has been telling how unlovely and uncomely she is; and He, looking down upon her and seeing His own robe of righteousness, calls her the "fairest of women." There is nothing so beautiful in the Father's eyes as the robe of His Son's righteousness.

How many times we are unlovely and uncomely, how many times we are unwise and fail to show forth our Beloved in our words, actions and lives. How many times, when the Spirit points out these defects to us, we cry out: "Jesus, I am black as the tents of Kedar. I shall never be beautiful and shine forth in thine image. Thou dost see how I stand forth in my own blackness and unloveliness, in the place of shining forth

in Thy beauty." And when we come to Him in deep humility, realizing our shortage and needs, He lets us see that we shall never be worthy but in His worthiness; nor beautiful but in His comeliness. He lets us see that we shall never be righteous but when clothed in His own robe of righteousness, but He lets us see that He loves us! that to Him we are fair!

This is a solace to the bride, as she obeys His voice and follows in the footsteps of the flock; as she hastens on, guided by Him, though unseen, along that path which grows plainer as she goes forward. She leads her kids along with her; she feeds them beside the tents of the faithful shepherds who have been with Him and have been taught of Him.

One peculiar feature in this book, is the obedient and teachable spirit the bride of Christ always has. Whether the answer comes as she had asked and hoped or not, she listens, yields, and obeys, at the first sound of His voice.

It is amazing to see how God is drawing those who are willing to pay the price and go through with the Lord. His hand is upon them, and He is drawing them to Himself in a deeper way. There is no self-satisfaction with those whom God is drawing and making hungry for Himself. Though we are always satisfied with Jesus, it seems that the more we feed upon Him and the more satisfied we become in belonging to Him, the hungrier we are for Him. The more we drink of the living waters, the more satisfied we become, and yet the thirstier we are. The closer we draw to God, the more Jesus is revealed to us, the more satisfied we are, and yet the more fervently our hearts pant for Him. The reason many of God's children are not hungry, is because they are not feeding at all, or are eating impure food, and drinking muddy water.

CHAPTER VI

THE BRIDE'S ZEAL AND BEAUTY. THE NUPTIAL CROWN. 1:9-11.

1:9. **"I have compared thee, O my love, to a steed in Pharaoh's chariots."** The Jewish historical allusion here, is to Israel as they fled before the horses and chariots of Pharaoh. None knew better than the Jews how swift were those famous horses; but by the strong arm of Jehovah, the Israelites outran and outstripped them. There were many steeds in Pharaoh's chariots, and the virgins who will make up the bride, while they are few compared to the many who are called, are as a great company.

Pharaoh's horses were famous for their value and beauty. They were the swiftest and the surest footed of all horses. They could go up over the hills and down through the valleys; they could leap over obstacles, and they never fell nor stumbled. In battle they obeyed, though they plunged into the face of the enemy and into death. They bore the chariots of war, they drew the chariots of the pomp and glory, the grandeur of the king.

As the Israelites outstripped the horses and hosts of Pharaoh, so the bride of the Lamb has obeyed her Lord's command with such fervor, that she has overtaken and passed the flock whose steps she has been following. As Pharaoh's horses were famous for their speed and beauty, as they were sure-footed and bore the pomp and grandeur of the king, so the bride's speed and beauty are becoming marked, and she bears the glory of the King. It is through us, that the power

of Christ's salvation is manifested upon earth. It is through us, that this salvation is put to the test, and men see what it will do. It is in our lives, that its power to give speed, strength and victory is manifested.

It is because the bride has pressed along after Him so swiftly, and been obedient to His voice though He did not lead her as she would have desired, that He has likened her to these famous horses. He has been teaching her that to obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams. She has hearkened to each command of His voice and taken each step He has pointed out. So fervently does she obey the voice of her Beloved, so eagerly does she pursue after Him, that finally she hears His voice saying to her: "I have compared thee, O My love, to a steed in Pharaoh's chariots."

Some translators make the word, steed, plural and some make it singular. Whether singular or plural, it shows forth the perfect unity of the bride of Christ. Though there are many virgins, they are only one bride, and are bound together in perfect unity, speaking the same thing and having the same mind.

She could not have told how it was that she fled along after Him so swiftly, how she really ran clinging to Him. Unseen by her, unknown by her, His hand has upheld her as she ran. He has lifted her over all the hard places, He has upheld her steps that they should not be moved. He has kept her feet from slipping, He has lifted her over the precipices, so that many times she has not even seen them. Then after supporting her, and bringing her on according to the desire of her heart toward Him, He compares her to the swift steeds in the chariots of Pharaoh.

How tenderly and graciously does our Lord address us. He keeps us faithful, and then He says: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." He spoke to, and dealt with Gideon so gently and encouraging-

ly, when he was hidden in the winepress beating out wheat. The angel saluted him with: "Jehovah is with thee, thou mighty man of valor." Gideon did not appear to be either a mighty man or a man of valor, for he was hidden away for fear of the enemy. But it was not anything in Gideon that made him mighty; it was because Jehovah was with him. And the Lord led him on until His gentleness made Gideon great, and he really became a mighty man of valor. How preciously God woos us on; and if we yield that He may work in us, He ascribes to us the fruit of His own working upon and within us.

Oh, that He might tell us that we are obedient and sure-footed as the steed in Pharaoh's chariots! Oh, that He might commend our zeal and swiftness in running after Him! Oh, that we might be so obedient and sure-footed, that when He calls us to follow Him down into the valley, we shall not stumble through despondency and unbelief; when He leads us up on the mount of vision and revelation, we shall not become elated and fall into the chasm of pride. May He hold us with a firm rein so that we may not go into forbidden pastures, so that we may not turn aside after our own wills and desires. But, hastening like the wind at the command of our Lord and Master, may we be so faithful and obedient, that we shall hear His voice saying: "I have compared thee, O My love, to the steeds in Pharaoh's chariots."

It is when He appears to be withdrawing, that we follow swifter, swifter. This is the way the Lord often works; and one purpose He has, is that His presence shall not become common. He is not pleased for us to settle down, taking it for granted that He is always waiting to reveal Himself to us when we take time to ask Him. Another purpose is, that He may draw us to go faster; and one way He takes to draw us along more swiftly, is to go faster Himself. Many times it does so little good for Him to tell us to hasten.

Have you heard His voice urging you to come after Him

more swiftly, telling you there is no time to trifle away? When you have felt Him withdrawing, have you commenced to run after Him faster, seeking Him day and night, humbling your heart before Him, crying unto Him? Have you been in the place where everybody and everything dropped out of sight, because you were hastening and panting after Him as the hart pants after the water brooks?

Dear child of God, have you had this close, mysterious intercourse with your Lord? Have you so longed to break through the veil into the glory of His presence, that your soul has cried to Him, "Lord, brush the veil aside, that I may enter in and behold You in all Your beauty?" Have you heard His voice commending your beauty in Him? Has He told you that you are following swiftly? Have you felt His pleasure upon you because you have been faithful, because you love Him with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind? Have you hastened along the path over which His flock follows Him, and faithfully fed beside the tents of the under-shepherds? Have you been so obedient to the least word from your Master, obeying each sound and touch, each movement of the rein, that you have heard Him say: "I have compared thee, O My love, to the steeds in Pharaoh's chariots"?

1:10. Already He sees His comeliness beginning to appear upon her, and He says: **"Thy cheeks are comely with plaits of hair** (or "jewels"), **thy neck with strings of jewels."** Eastern women enhance their beauty by strings of jewels hanging down upon their cheeks, giving their faces the appearance of being framed in jewels. It is this custom that is here used to describe the bride's face, ornamented with the attributes and graces of her Lord; for the jewels are symbolic of the comeliness of Christ.

As God reveals to us the beauty of Christ's attributes, our rejoicing may be so great that we will mistake revelation for

possession; but if we have really put them on, we shall not know it. Just as a man cannot look upon his own face, so it is with the bride of Christ; she will not see her face when it is framed in the beautiful attributes of Christ.

It is when the jewel of humility, "Which is in the sight of God of great price," is appearing upon her, that she is the least conscious of it. It is not those who claim to have humility, faith, love, longsuffering, and other fruits of the Spirit perfected in them, that have really put them on. I doubt if the virgin is conscious of it who is clothed with the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit. It is the *hidden man* of the heart that is thus clothed; and it must be put on within before it appears without; then it is only manifested in the eyes of others and not in the eyes of the one who is thus adorned.

The one in whom faith has been much perfected, does not boast of his faith. It is when we begin to put on the jewels of Christ's attributes, that we begin to see our nakedness and poverty. With each jewel put on, comes a deeper revelation of Christ's fullness and our shortage; and we see our lack of adorning more clearly as the transfiguration goes on. It is when our Lord is the only One before our eyes, that "We all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Spirit of the Lord."

When the bride is following hard after the Lord, she is being separated more and more from those with whom she was once traveling. Many times her heart has ached and bled as these separations came; but the faster she runs after Him, the quicker will God bring her to the place where she does not notice when people drop away. The desires she once had, have gone; and in their place, she finds God's desires, which He is working within her. In the place which friends had held in her heart, she finds only, and always,

Christ. She wants Him only, she finds satisfaction nowhere but in Him.

The closer the bride draws to her Lord, and the clearer she sees Him, the more she sees her own unworthiness and blackness; but to Him who loved her and washed her from her sins in His own blood, she is beautiful. The Father sees her in Christ, and the attributes of Jesus Christ and the graces of the Holy Spirit are already beginning to be manifested. Christ looking upon her sees His own robe of righteousness; He died that she might wear it, He became sin that she might become the righteousness of God in Him, and He sees that robe which covers her through His death. This robe is Christ, for He is made unto us righteousness.

In the Revised Version, the first clause is translated: "Thy cheeks are comely with plaits of hair;" the last two words in both translations are supplied by the translators. Whether we accept the Authorized Version, "of jewels," meaning the comeliness and beauty of Christ, or that of the Revised Version, "of hair," meaning the separation of the bride of Christ (see notes on ch. 4:1), the result and meaning are the same; for only as the bride separates herself unto her Lord, can His attributes and beauty be worked within her and appear upon her.

It is alone with our Lord; it is when the strife and opinions of the human have ceased; it is when earth has receded and Heaven and Eternity have drawn near enough for us to begin to see the unseen, that the voice of our Lord is heard in our hearts, and His beauty appears. It is in such separation and communion, that His image begins to be manifested. If the bride's locks of separation are short and thin, uneven by being cut off by the world, there can be no beauty of Christ upon her. How many times God's children try to walk with the world and Christ at the same time. It is then, that their separation is marred, and His jewels never ornament them; that which should be a chaplet of grace unto their heads and chains about their necks, is not theirs.

Do you know that in the place of the yoke of sin, which we once wore, God will adorn our necks with the jewels of the attributes of His Son, held together by the gold chain of His divine nature? Do you know that in the place of bondage of any kind, God is waiting to make us free in Jesus Christ? And the way He makes us free, is by making us love slaves of the Lord? "Sin shall not have dominion over you." God would have us adorned with humility, patience, longsuffering and His faithfulness, where the yoke of bondage to sin and the flesh has dragged us down. He wants us to be free and walk upright, and then He will ornament our necks with the divine nature and beauty of Jesus Christ.

Have you thought that sometime, in some mysterious way, God will change everything about you that is not pleasing to Him? Do not deceive your own heart. He only changes us as we take up our cross *daily* and follow Christ; as we die daily that the life of Christ may be manifested in us, and His beauty look out from every thought, word, action.

As each virgin of the bride enters into this place and experience of transfiguration, the yoke of sin and bondage which she has worn, will be taken away; and her neck will be comely with golden chains, or chains of jewels. His nature and the freedom which is in Him, will take the place of the yoke of sin. As she takes up her cross daily and follows after Him, going forth unto Him without the camp in every-increasing separation, His attributes will appear, held together by His divine nature; and about her neck will hang those priceless jewels, which come through her union with Him, and her faith in the work which he has wrought upon Calvary.

The attributes of Jesus Christ and the graces and fruit of the Spirit must not only surround, frame, and control every look and expression in our faces; but they must hang from our necks, held together and perfected by putting on His divine nature; they must cover our hearts, out of which are the issues

of life. We must be controlled and held by His life and power, bound to put on His attributes, just as we were held and controlled by the yoke of sin. "As ye presented your members as servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity, even so now present your members as servants to righteousness." The yoke that love puts upon our necks, is sweet and never chafes; it hangs down, protecting and filling our hearts, out of which comes every moving and action in our lives.

Her heart had been filled with such yearning for her Lord, that, with increasing speed, she has fled along clinging to Him. She has caught such glimpses of the King in His beauty, that, unconsciously to her, the reflection remains; and at last she hears that voice which is like the sound of many waters. He does not remind her of the swarthiness, which the sun had left upon her; He compares her to the swift steeds of Pharaoh's chariots, He is made glad that she is becoming beautified by separation unto Him, by putting on the jewels of His attributes; He is pleased that His divine nature is adorning her neck.

More than ever before, she begins to apprehend that God's supreme purpose is being wrought out within and upon her. "For whom He foreknew, He also foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."

Before we can put on the likeness of Jesus Christ, we must see ourselves and know how we look; we must be brought to the place where we are not dismayed nor cast down when we discover how little we are conformed to His image. We cannot put on His attributes over our own attributes. The golden chains and the jewels cannot be put on over any yoke; the jewels cannot surround and frame the face, above which is hair that the world has haggled and taken away. It is only as we see our need, that it can be supplied.

God looks down with pleasure upon the bride, as He be-

holds her face ornamented and framed with the attributes of His Son, and sees her neck adorned with His likeness and the graces of the Holy Spirit. To have our Lord manifested upon us in this way, means death and suffering to the flesh; and most people will not pay the price for these precious jewels. As we realize the near Coming of the Lord and see our flesh rampant many times, as we discern upon us ornaments that are not of Him, manifestations that are not in the Spirit, God makes us to know that we must put them away and wear only those ornaments that are provided by, and in our Beloved.

1:11. **"We will make thee plaits** (or circles; viz. a crown) **of gold with studs of silver."** "We"—meaning the three Persons of the Godhead—will crown the bride of Christ with a crown which is of gold and silver; it is the Lamb's *Wife* who will be crowned. The same meaning is brought out concerning Jehovah and His Ancient People, to whom He was a husband. "I decked thee with ornaments and I put bracelets upon thy hands and a chain on thy neck . . . and a beautiful crown upon thy head. Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver, thy raiment was of fine linen and silk and broidered work" (Ezek. 16:12, 13).

Although Jesus Christ died for lost humanity that He might redeem them from sin and death, each Person in the adorable Trinity has a part in this work of perfecting, preparing, and ornamenting the bride of Christ. God the Father, has planned this uttermost Salvation, and it has been carried out and finished through the work of Jesus Christ upon the Cross of Calvary. It is being made flesh in us through our faith in that work, and through the teaching, leading, and power of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit convicts us and reveals to us the Lord Jesus Christ and His wonderful work of redemption. He reveals the power that is to usward, according to that working of the strength of God's might which He wrought in Christ

Jesus when He raised Him from the dead, and made Him to sit at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.

It is not through only one Person of the Godhead, that the bride is ornamented and crowned. An old translation gives it: "A crown which is of gold *We three* will make for thee." The crown is already prepared and laid up for whosoever will overcome.

Many crowns are spoken of in the Bible, but only those who overcome and sit down with Christ in His throne, even as He overcame and sat down with His Father in His throne, will wear the crown which the three Persons of the Trinity promise to make for the bride. It is a crown, the description of which would not appeal to any earthly queen; and from a human standpoint, it does not appear that it could be very beautiful. But when the imagery is known, none could be more beautiful or precious.

If all the splendor of Heaven could be brought together and molded and changed into a string of jewels for the bride's neck; if all the stars of the heavens, and all the glory of things in Heaven, could be made into a crown for her head, they would be as tawdry tinsel to the beautiful chain of His divine nature, in which are set the jewels of His precious attributes; and to the glorious crown wherewith she will be crowned.

The gold means the divine nature of Jesus Christ. In the Jewish temple, with its curtains, furniture and clothing of the priests, the gold always symbolized Christ in His divine nature. This crown, which the Godhead will make and put upon the brow of the Lamb's wife, will be made of the precious divine nature of the Heavenly Bridegroom, who died that she might partake of His nature and become a fit bride for such a Bridegroom. This is not all; this crown of gold is orna-

mented with studs of silver. "Silver" is the symbol of the atonement (Ex. 30:11-16). The silver that was used in the Tabernacle, was from the half shekel that the Israelites gave "to make atonement for their souls." There is deep, precious meaning in this crown that God is making for the bride of the Lamb; the whole foundation shows forth His divine nature, which, through the working of the Holy Spirit, is more and more crowning her.

Only the Son of God could come down and become man that she might be redeemed; and the crown that He gives His bride, the nuptial crown that she must wear if she would sit with Him upon His throne, is His own nature in the place of her sinful nature or her flesh. She becomes bone of His bones and flesh of His flesh. The silver studs that appear upon this glorious crown, show forth the atoning work of Christ, through which, alone, she can put on His divine nature and wear the crown. The beauty of the golden crown is in the silver studs.

The very nature of Jesus Christ, together with His attributes, is adorned with the silver studs; for it is through the wonderful plan of Redemption, that He will get eternal glory to His name. When the Second Person of the Trinity came down and died for you and me, it was the greatest proof of His holiness and righteousness, His love and mercy; the greatest manifestation of Himself and all He is, that He could give. Already His divine attributes and the adorning of separation unto Him, begin to appear upon the bride, His life and beauty ornamenting her and crowning her through the atonement of His blood. "Because thou didst keep the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial, that hour which is to come upon the whole world to try them that dwell upon the earth. I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown."

"Hold fast all the dealings wherewith I deal with thee, hold fast every downward step into humility and upward step into

My presence over which I have brought thee. Hold fast every revelation of My will, every call to a greater separation; hold fast every chastening and scourging; yield to all the purifying processes into which I have put thee, lest, having gone thus far, this heavenly crown be taken from thy head. Not only that; hold fast all the fruit, which all of these dealings and workings upon thee have caused to come forth; guard them until they have fully ripened, and then preserve them that thou mayest present them to Me at My coming. Thy head must be crowned with the manifestation of My divine nature; thou must have all held together and ornamented with the working of the atonement which I have made for thee, if thou wouldest wear the nuptial crown and sit with Me upon My throne. Only those who are faithful unto death shall have a crown of life."

It is Jesus, Jesus, all the time. God's will that He shall have the preëminence in all things, is beautifully portrayed. Our putting Him on, through which He becomes all things to us and we become full in Him, is pictured so vividly in this description of the adorning of the bride, that our hearts swell with longing to enter with all fullness into this which God has prepared for us. The same divine nature holds the jewels of His attributes together and frames the bride's face. The same divine nature and attributes ornament her neck, falling down over her heart and filling the place, whence springs the fountains of her whole life. The same divine nature is a crown upon her locks of separation. But on the crown appear the silver studs, through which all the other adorning of the person of the bride is put on.

If we would finally wear that crown which is laid up for those who love His appearing, we must ever have upon our heads the helmet of salvation, which this silver studded crown also symbolizes. There is such satisfaction in our hearts, when we know that the three Persons of the Godhead are interested and are working for us. At the time of conviction,

when we were sinners, and the Holy Spirit first pointed our eyes to Jesus Christ, and we beheld Him hanging, bleeding, dying there upon the cross, God in His tripersonality began the work of preparation and bringing us Home. It is only when the attributes of our Lord begin to appear, that the Holy Spirit speaks of, and promises the crown. And it is much later in the Song, that the bride attains to the place of the overcomer.

Let us yield to every dealing of the Lord, let us not miss nor lose one. Do not let any indifference or unrest get upon you, for the time is short; you cannot afford to loiter by the way. If we linger over trivial things; if we let ourselves be taken up with anything but our dear Lord, the hope of His calling to us, and the prize set before us, we shall fall short and not be found ready.

To know the teaching concerning the Coming of the Lord, will never take any one up to meet Him in the clouds. To teach and rejoice over His Coming, to testify and talk about it, will never secure for any one the glorious nuptial crown. "To Him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne." It is the overcomers who will wear this crown, who will be His bride and sit with Him upon His throne.

Sometimes we see our shortage so clearly, that we almost despair of even God getting us ready. We have cried to Him in real self-abasement, "Lord, can You get me ready? Can even *You* prepare me? Can You hold me true to You until my locks of separation grow long and beautiful and perfect? Can You protect them, so that they shall not be haggled nor shorn by the shears of the flesh or of the world? Can You take the attributes of Jesus Christ and adorn my face, so that I will look like Him? Can You enable me to ever wear them upon my neck; and over, and in, my heart? Can You crown me with these attributes and the full working of the power of Christ's atoning work

through His finished work on Calvary?" And we hear Him say, "All things are possible with God." "Faithful is He who calleth you, who will also do it."

The Lord's purpose in commanding her to follow in the footsteps of the flock and feed near the tents of the under-shepherds, was not only to direct her feet into the path which would lead to Him and to the answer to her prayers, but to test her obedience and humility. He has not purposed that she shall always follow others as they follow Him; but she has confessed her inability to find where He is feeding His flock, and where He is making it to lie down and rest at noon. So He tells her to watch the steps of those whom He is leading, and listen to those whom He has taught and chosen to feed the sheep. She must not follow every voice nor walk in every track that appears, she must not feed by every tent she finds. He will guide her so that she shall not be deceived nor be put to shame; He will protect her from the hirelings and the wolves in sheep's clothing; He will guide her to His chosen ones.

CHAPTER VII

THE BRIDEGROOM'S TABLE AND HIS PRECIOUSNESS. 1:12-14.

1:12. **"While the King sat at His table, my spikenard sent forth its fragrance."** He has told her how she may find Him, He has upheld her in her eager search; and as she hastens forward toward the sound of His voice, casting all else aside in her eager desire for Him and Him alone, she suddenly finds herself beside His tent. She sees a table spread before her, and she sees her Beloved sitting at His table; she finds herself sitting with Him in sweet fellowship and communion. As is always true of the faithful persevering one, she finds He has given her more than she asked.

At last she has attained the object of her earnest prayers and search, and He has brought her into His presence, even to His own table. He does not come and sit with her at *her* table, but He invites her to come to *His* table; He invites her to listen to His voice and follow and obey it until she finds the table of continual communion and close fellowship. He has spread a table before her in green pastures, He has revealed to her fountains of living water; He has brought her to rest beside the cool, still streams; and He, the Great Shepherd of the sheep, is there beside her. The table is in the presence of all her enemies, and her cup is overflowing with His loving kindness and His grace.

She has entered a place of communion with Him such as she has never had before; communion that is deep and full of peace and feeding upon Him in uninterrupted quiet. A fellowship that abides, and where He sits with her; not the fleet-

ing communion that does not abide nor satisfy, but a fellowship where she both feeds and rests in His presence. An intimacy in which He sets before her the hidden manna and fills her cup to overflowing with living water. A holy familiarity, which floods her soul with joy and peace; peace that flows like a river and passes all understanding.

The first taste we have of the Lord's table, is when we enter into our secret closet and close the door; shutting out everybody and everything, all our thoughts and desires, and all sounds from the world. It is upon the door of this closet of communion, that He comes and knocks; it is there He enters; and when we have shut the door, He spreads a table before us, and we sup with Him and He with us. He spreads this table with heavenly viands; and we not only taste of the hidden manna, but we learn to fed upon it more continuously, we drink of the living water more abundantly.

We cannot sit at this table with our voices clattering and every avenue of our being filled with unrest. We cannot abide at His feet and hear His voice when our opinions are rampant, and our thoughts are wandering to and fro like the tramps in the alley that feed upon the refuse in the garbage cans. .We must yield to Him in quietness and confidence and seek Him diligently. We must follow every direction He gives us if we would find this table and abide there; for we can only sit at this table when we have commenced to partake of the grace of silence within and without.

When the Lord was on earth, He told His disciples that He had meat that they knew not of; and He added: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me." Are we letting the will of God be our meat and drink? Are we gaining strength through this precious provision? It is only as we get still before Him, that we learn to know and do His will.

This hidden feeding upon Him, this hidden table of communion, at which none ever sits with us but our dear Lord,

is outwardly set forth as we sit with one another at the Communion Table. We partake of the bread and wine, which are emblems of His broken body and spilt blood; the outward tokens of our inward communion with Him in His death and resurrection, and of feeding upon Him. As we partake of these sacred emblems, we do it in remembrance of Him, and we show forth His death until He come. We show forth the spiritual relation, which God has put between Him and us.

We sit at His table when we are alone with Him and meditate upon His Word, and our souls are fed and nourished by the deep meanings and truths which He opens up to our hearts.

There is one point we must not overlook if we would find this table of hidden manna, if we would feed upon the Bread of life and drink deeply of the Water of life, if we would be strengthened by doing the will of God. In order to enter into this close relation to the Lord and into all it brings, we must sit at the *King's* table. Only when He is King of our lives can we enter into these privileges and experiences. We cannot be king of our own lives and expect He will reveal to us His secrets, or take us into His confidence. If Christ were sitting upon the throne of our lives continually, we would be sitting at His table continually.

The Spikenard, which is precious, fragrant, and most costly, is sealed in an alabaster box or cruse, which must be broken before the fragrance comes forth. It is a figure of that humility, with which only God can clothe the hidden man of the heart. It is when we sit at the feet of the Lord, and, like Mary, "keep hearing His words," that He can put within us the precious Spikenard of Humility. It is in this lowly place, that we see our nothingness and unworthiness. The further away we are from His feet, the more seldom we shall sit at His table; and the less humility do we have, to send forth its perfume.

Not only is this fragrant Spikenard a figure of Humility,

but it is a figure of the gratitude and praise that come from a humble heart, which knows it deserves nothing in itself. It is the gratitude the bride feels as she realizes that it is only through pure grace, her Lord has brought her to the place in which she finds herself; which thanks Him for doing exceeding abundantly above all she could ask or think. It is that inworking of the Holy Spirit that gives her Lord all the glory, and worships Him in deep rest and confidence. It is the fragrance of rejoicing that He is worthy though she is unworthy; that is satisfied to know that, though in herself she is black, in Him she is white and pure; and that she is beautiful in His comeliness.

She finds, as she has been communing with Him, that He has been putting within her the Spikenard of Humility, which His presence draws out until it is poured out at His feet; and the fragrance goes out not only to Him, but is discerned by all who come in contact with her. They do not come with her into this secret closet, for the door is closed. They do not see the table nor her precious Lord; they do not know that she is sitting at this wonderful hidden table of communion with Him; but they smell the fragrance that comes from the Spikenard of that sacred relation and secret communion.

When we go into the Holy of holies within us, where our Lord ever dwells, we must close the door; but in order to close the door, everything that is of the flesh or of the earth must be put out of our hearts; for there is only room in there for Him and us. As soon as the door is closed and our Lord is sitting there with us, He begins to impart to us this precious Spikenard, which is being continually poured out at His feet. It seems that the more it is poured out before Him, the more it increases within us.

God would have us dwell in His presence until it is the atmosphere we breathe, the breath and source of our lives and joy; until it is so a part of us that we are hardly con-

scious of this holy relation with God, unless, through some carelessness, it is interrupted and we miss it. Let us remember that the Lord does not pour the Spikenard of Humility upon the evil odors of our pride or arrogance. It is easy to ask God to adorn us with humility and enable us to be lost sight of in Christ. But the process, through which we must pass to receive the answer to this prayer, is the way of the cross and suffering. It is ever taking sides against ourselves; it is refusing to pity our own suffering; it is taking sides against all the workings and evil odors of our pride, self-confidence and self-seeking. For only when the alabaster box is cleansed of these self-workings, can it be filled with the Spikenard of Humility.

1:13. **"My beloved is unto me as a bundle of myrrh, that lieth betwixt my breasts."** Not only does He draw out the perfume of her Spikenard so that her humility appears to Himself and others, but He is so precious to her that she says: "My Beloved is unto me as a bundle of myrrh that lieth betwixt my breasts." An old translator has given it: "A little bundle made of myrrh, which doth always abide."

In eastern countries, much is made of costly oils and perfumes. The women use these costly perfumes freely, concealing in their bosoms little bags of aromatic herbs, or a small cruse of aromatic oil, which perfumes their whole person. But it is not such myrrh, aloes or cassia with which the bride's person is perfumed; deep in her heart dwells her Beloved. Jesus Christ is pictured here as a bag of Myrrh, a cruse of sweetness, of preciousness, of fragrance, of perfume, that will perfume every part of her being. He, in whom is all the perfume of Heaven and earth, has taken up His abode within her, and He has not come in for just a little while, but He will stay there through all the dark night of this dispensation.

The word, "lieth," means to "remain over night; to abide

permanently." "Night," in the Song of Solomon, always signifies the absence of the Bridegroom. Though He has gone to prepare a place for us, and we are left apparently alone, He is dwelling within us, hidden away in our hearts where He took up His abode when we came to Him and were born again. He has been there ever since, whether we have been conscious of His presence and yielded to Him or not. "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

The "breasts" of the bride are the same as the "breastplate" of the Christian, which we are told in 1 Thess. 5:8, is "faith and love" (See notes on ch. 4:5). It is through faith and love, that He comes into our hearts when we are saved; it is through faith working by love, that we are kept and go on to perfection. It is by faith that Christ dwells in our hearts, and we become rooted and grounded in love. It is by His indwelling through faith and love, that we become strong to apprehend the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled unto all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:17-19).

It is during our journeyings through this wilderness, while we are in these bodies of our humiliation, that our precious Lord is dwelling in our hearts as a little bundle of Myrrh. He is abiding within us through the darkness of the night of His absence; and will abide until the day breaks in His Second Coming, and the night and shadows of this dispensation flee away. It is through faith and love, that He dwells there; it is faith and love that hold Him there, and through which we discern His presence and perfume, and are thereby refreshed.

He is our precious bundle of Myrrh; He is the secret treasure whose perfume fills our hearts and is for us alone. All the perfume that is ever perfected in us, comes from this

hidden Heavenly Myrrh. We are told here that it is all the night this little bundle of Myrrh abides. It is during our Lord's absence that He sheds forth His perfume within us, encouraging, comforting and revealing to us His love. When the Eternal Day breaks, then will He be manifested and will no longer be hidden away, but we shall see Him as He is, and we shall be like Him. We shall not need His encouragement and comfort then, for all shadows will have fled away, and we shall forever be with the Lord.

Our Beloved is calling us to dwell in touch and communion with Him in that secret meeting place within us, until His perfume is manifested to us, and through us to those about us. It is as we do this and treasure this Holy One who is the Fountain of all Heaven's perfume, that His presence and preciousness become sweeter to us day by day. How precious is the secret of His presence! Such sweet communion do we have with Him, so sweetly does He abide within us! How gentle is His voice, how He speaks to the hearts in which He has taken up His abode!

At first, when we begin to experience this relation with our dear Lord, we want to tell every one about the treasure that we have found. But as we go on, there is a holiness about it, which we guard with jealous care; and we shrink from speaking of it to any one unless the Lord leads. This place of meeting and ascending incense within our hearts, where we begin to meet our Lord and finally dwell with Him there, becomes to us a real Holy of holies. Are we not the temples of God, and should we not guard that sacred inner place where His presence ever dwells, and where we must go when we would hear from God and reach the mercy seat? This is not imaginary, as all of God's most consecrated saints have proved down through the ages.

When Christ is really having His way in our lives, and we are seeking His face and obeying Him, we shall not need

to tell others that He is dwelling in our hearts as a little bundle of Myrrh, for they will catch a little odor now and then; and this is all they can receive or understand until He begins to be the bundle of Myrrh in their own hearts. But all who smell this mysterious fragrance are attracted to our Lord, though they may not know whence the odor comes that surrounds our lives.

Myrrh is not only fragrant, but it is bitter; the bitterness is an emblem of suffering. Fragrant and bitter, setting forth our identification with Him in the bitterness of partaking with Him in His death; through which bitterness we put on the fragrance of His life and attributes.

If we would have our Lord dwell in our hearts and have full control, if we would ever live in the atmosphere of His perfume and be sending forth His precious odors ourselves, we shall find that it is not all joy; but there is an entering into the fellowship of His sufferings. There is the bitterness that comes through our union with Him as we remain in the place of death, dying to all that is unworthy that His life may be manifested. As we partake with Him in His death, and yield to the cross at every step, how His perfume goes forth and refreshes our souls, and attracts others.

Only as the Myrrh is crushed and pierced, does its fragrance go forth; and it is not easy to yield to the crushing and piercing process. This, truly, is bitter, though it yields fragrance in the peaceable fruits of righteousness. As we meet Him in this hidden place, He reveals to us that the slain Lamb must have a slain bride; and we hear His voice calling us to join that Blood-washed company who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. We hear Him calling us to be willing to suffer the loss of all things that we may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and become conformed to His death.

How sweet would He be to our own souls if we yielded

and ever remembered that He was dwelling within. He is all the perfume we have, for there is nothing sweet about us. He is all beauty and fragrance. As we take up our cross and follow Him, our Spikenard is a sweet odor before Him, and He is more and more the little bundle of Myrrh, which, through faith and love, is hidden away in our hearts.

As Christ fills this place within us, there is no room for anybody or anything else. More than all other attractions is He to us. His perfume is most precious to us, as we always bear about in our bodies the dying of Jesus that the life also of Jesus may be manifested. His fragrance refreshes and encourages us in the darkest night of trial and testing. How many times when our hearts would cry, "Why hast thou forsaken me!" do His odors steal over us; and we are conscious that, however dark it is and however alone we feel, "Closer is He than breathing and nearer than hands and feet." As He thus refreshes us with His presence, those about us detect this divine hidden Myrrh, and He is glorified.

1:14. **"My Beloved is unto me as a cluster of Henna-flowers in the vineyards of Engedi."** Not only is He hidden away in the bride's heart through faith and love, not only does she meet Him there in the Holy of holies within her own breast, but He is also unto her, "As a cluster of Henna-flowers in the vineyards of Engedi."

The Henna-flowers are heavy with fragrance and hang in beautiful cream white clusters against their bright green leaves. The flowers and leaves present such richness of perfume, and diversity of color and beauty, as are a fitting emblem of Christ, who embraces all the power and wonderful attributes of the Godhead. "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."

Just as the myrrh was hidden away in the bosom and perfumed the person from within, so the henna-flowers were used by oriental women to deck and adorn their persons

without. The fragrance of the myrrh is perceptible to others, but they neither see nor know what it is nor where it is hidden. The henna-flowers are not only smelled, but seen and admired by all. The Beloved, as the cluster of Henna-flowers, is that decking and ornamenting ourselves with His attributes in our daily walk, which is seen, recognized and enjoyed by all about us. But before we can be adorned with this outward adorning, He must become to us as the little bundle of Myrrh.

The word "Henna" in the Hebrew means the "Ransom price," and He is our "Ransom price." Only our precious Lord, in all His fullness and perfection of attributes, could pay the ransom price to redeem our souls. He is the "Light of the world," He is the "Way and the Truth and the Life." He is "full of grace and truth" and is "made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." He is our High Priest, and He is our Sacrifice; "He ever liveth to make intercession for us," and He is our "Advocate." He is the "Bread of life," "The Hidden Manna" which came down from Heaven. He is the "Rose of Sharon," the "Lily of the valleys." He is the "Fairest of ten thousand," the "One altogether lovely." Words fail to express His innumerable graces and attributes.

Though He is One, Eternity will fail to reveal His manifold beauties and graces. He is the one Christ, yet His body is made up of many redeemed souls. He is the true Vine, yet are there many branches. He is the only-begotten Son of God, yet is He leading many sons to Glory. He is the only Saviour, yet is He full of grace and truth. Though He is One, and there has never been, nor will ever be another like Him; so manifold and wonderful are His graces and attributes, that to her who loves Him, He is a cluster of Henna-flowers in the vineyards of Engedi. Engedi was famed for the aromatic flowers and shrubs that abounded there.

But all that have ever filled those fragrant vineyards could never convey even a shadow of the meaning of Christ's beauty and fragrance.

It is as we partake of His death and feed upon Him, that we are able to put on these Henna-flowers through His ransom price. He would have us put on these blossoms of His attributes, bought at such a price when He became a ransom for us; and in order to do this, we must put away the vile weeds, the thistles and nettles of our flesh. The adorning of Christlikeness must appear in our looks, our words, and must adorn our every action. The many blossoms that make up one cluster, show forth His attributes which are upon the one Stalk, Christ. Every one is for us to put on, for when people know that we are called by His Name, they expect to see Him when they look at us. They judge our Christ by the way we look, and by what they see in you and me.

If they see upon us the Henna-flowers, those flowers which come through His ransom price, and which we can put on because He paid the ransom price, they will know that they are not natural, but supernatural. They will see the beauty and smell the fragrance of our Lord, and then, and then only, can we say that our Beloved is unto us, "As a cluster of Henna-flowers in the vineyards of Engedi."

God has given perfume a wonderful place, not only in this book, but in the worship of the Jewish temple. All the perfume in the incense and in the holy anointing oil, pointed to Christ. That oil, which could not be put upon human flesh, neither could they make any like unto it, showed forth Jesus Christ as the only perfume, together with the graces of the Holy Spirit. It pointed to Christ as the only One acceptable unto God. The incense, which was made of aromatic gums beaten small, and which ascended continually before the face of God, symbolized the fragrance of God's only-begotten Son, in whom He was always well pleased.

There are all kinds of imitations of the heavenly perfumes and precious attributes of Christ; but all that anybody puts on which are imitations of the real Christ, will never look nor smell like Him. We may put on the human humility, but it is no more like the humility of Jesus Christ than anything else that is human is like God. We may put on longsuffering unto stoicism, but it is no more like the longsuffering of Christ than any human attribute is like an attribute of God. We may put on human sweetness and attractiveness, which may seem fragrant to those who cannot discern the difference; but none of these are any more like the fragrance of Christ than the odor of ill-smelling weeds is like the pure fragrance of the lily of the valley.

God would have us put on these attributes, He would have us decked in that beauty which comes from our Beloved alone, and which will adorn us as we have faith in Him. Only these divine flowers, which have been bought for us with such a price, are beautiful and fragrant; and they should adorn us so that all others may behold Him in our words and actions, in our thoughts and feelings, in everything about us. At every step in our lives should He be more manifested to those around us. If we are protecting our flesh, giving way to ourselves and to our own ideas and desires, clinging to our old habits of the natural, we cannot be ornamented with these flowers from His great ransom. Jesus will not let us put on these Henna-flowers over our old dead leaves of covering, or over our vile-smelling attributes. This adorning is done little by little, blossom by blossom.

CHAPTER VIII

MUTUAL LOVE. THE ETERNAL HABITATION. 1:15-17.

1:15. **"Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thine eyes are as doves."** The Bridegroom is speaking to the bride. Have you heard the Lord speaking to you and saying: "Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair"? In the original, the word, "fair," means "bright, beautiful." It is Jesus speaking, not only to the bride as a company, but to each virgin in the bride. If we have Him abiding deep in our hearts as a little bundle of Myrrh, if we are decked with the Henna-flowers of His attributes, He will look down and see His own beauty and detect His own fragrance, and can say: "Behold, thou art fair."

God has provided that, as we behold the glory of the Lord, we shall be transfigured into the same image from glory to glory. This was the supreme purpose of His creating and foreordaining us, that we might be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29). The wedding garment which He has provided for us, is Himself in His beauty and with all His attributes; and He is grieved when we are walking unworthily and living beneath our privileges.

The bride of the Lamb does not walk with outstretched neck and wanton eyes, as is spoken of the daughters of Zion (Isa. 3:16). Her eyes are not wandering to and fro in infidelity to her Beloved, but they are chaste, constant; they are not only *like* the eyes of the dove, but they are *"as doves."* Of all the figures that are used to describe the character of the bride, this is one of the most expressive. The dove is always

constant to one mate, and there is such love and devotion between them as is found with no other bird. Though they quarrel, they make up with a love and intelligence that is found in no other creature excepting with man.

The dove's constancy to one mate is an emblem of the Christian whose eye is single to Christ and to His glory. We are not told that the bride's eyes are as hawks' eyes, or like vultures' eyes, which are looking for carrion and are cruel and relentless; but they are as doves. She is not going around with wandering eyes, and untrue to her Lord, but her eyes are patiently fixed upon her Lord; and with wide-open eyes, untouched by slumber or heaviness, does she watch for the first ray of the dawn of His appearing.

It is as we look at Him, that we are transfigured into His image; for we become like that which fills our vision, and reflect that which is set before our faces. Those who are looking at the world, who desire the flesh, who are looking to man, will reflect the image of the world, the flesh, and man. But those who behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, will be transfigured into His image from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord.

The dove knows the seasons and the time of her return, she always comes to meet the sun and the balmy air of spring; and the bride of Jesus Christ knows the times and seasons. While she does not know the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man cometh, she is not a child of darkness that that day should overtake her as a thief. She, too, will come back to meet the summer of His presence; to greet the warmth that will come to all creation at the return of the Sun of righteousness.

Even at this time, the bride of Christ is discerning the signs of His Coming on every side; and when He comes, it will be the time for her to go home. In these dark and perilous days, she is watching with wide-open eyes for the first dawn, the first ray, the first indication of the daybreak.

The striking feature and beauty of the bride of Jesus Christ, is that her eyes are as doves, gentle, pure, and faithful to Him; not looking to the right nor to the left. She is not looking behind her, as did Lot's wife, thus being changed into a pillar of barrenness. She has not put her hand to the plow and looked back, thus becoming unworthy of her Lord. She is not casting one glance over her shoulder at the world, at the things and the friends she has left, and regretting that she had to give them up. Her eyes are fixed upon her Lord; they are fixed upon the everlasting hills, upon the light of day that is beginning to break a little in the east.

The dove is also the emblem of repentance. Of all miserable creatures, the bride is the most miserable when there is anything between her and her Lord. She cannot lie down too low at His feet, nor humble herself too much if there is a thing that has come between Him and her. She draws near to Him in love and repentance, and gets everything out of the way as fast as is possible. She will not walk in rebellion nor in her own ways, but in obedience and in His ways.

Again the Bridegroom calls her "fair" and her heart is thrilled as she feels His approval upon her. How little everybody else becomes, and how trifling is their approval when compared with having the approval of Jesus Christ resting consciously upon us. Especially is this so, when by obeying and walking with Him, we incur the displeasure and disapproval of those who name His Name. But joy and satisfaction fill the heart of the bride when He speaks of her purity and fidelity to Him; when He calls her fair, and even tells her that to Him she is beautiful.

If our hearts are satisfied to be fair in the eyes of our Beloved, though we are black and unlovely in the eyes of all others, we shall become much fairer to Him; and His words of approval will fall upon our hearts more continuously.

1 : 16. **"Behold, Thou art fair, my Beloved, yea, pleasant:**

also our couch is green." Her heart rejoices and is encouraged to call Him by a dearer, closer name as she hears Him call her His love; so she addresses Him as her Beloved. "Behold, *Thou* ("Thou" is emphatic in the text) art fair, my Beloved, yea, pleasant." Her love is drawn out by His words of love and commendation. She thinks of her blackness in herself, she remembers how unworthy she has felt as the eyes of the daughters of Jerusalem were upon her. She remembers how the sun of sin had scorched her when she was tending the vineyards of the world, and she cries out: "Not I, Lord, not I, but *Thou* art fair! Without Thee there is no beauty in me, without Thee I would be but black and scorched. But Thou, my Beloved, art fair, Thou art bright and beautiful, and it is Thy beauty that is upon me. Thou hast died that I might be fair; that I might become the righteousness of God; that it might be given me, as Thy bride, to array myself in fine linen, glistering and pure, even righteous acts through Thy power."

Always undone apart from Him, but in Him more than conqueror. Always black and unlovely in herself, but in Him "A glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

Oh how tender and gracious is our dear Lord! It is only as the bride, with unveiled face, beholds as in a mirror His glory, that she is changed into the same image from glory to glory. She has commenced to behold Him with unveiled face. Only a little while ago, there was a veil between her and Him; but obedience to Him, following hard after Him, communion with Him, have taken away this veil.

She is now entering into such close communion and touch with her Beloved, that more and more clearly she is beholding Him in His glory, and is beginning to be changed into the same likeness. *He* does not remind her that her fairness is only the reflection of His beauty. He imputes that reflection

of His glory to her and calls her fair; but *she* knows and owns that it is the reflection of His own comeliness upon her. She glories in having no beauty of her own.

He is not only fair, but He is delightful, sweet, and restful; or, as it is translated, "pleasant." All who come to Him shall find rest, all who seek Him shall be refreshed. "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Nowhere else can a soul find rest excepting by coming to the Lord, looking to Him, beholding Him as "pleasant."

All the storms and hurricanes that come up against us, will not be able to dismay nor cast us down when we really see our Lord as "pleasant," and abide close to Him. In turmoil, when things have not gone as they should, when there may have been mistakes and blunders, how unspeakably precious it is to settle ourselves in the Lord. Such sweet assurance and holy stillness come over our spirits from His pleasantness, as is a foretaste of Heaven. The voice of our Beloved speaks to the billows, He quiets us upon His own bosom; and God's peace takes the place of the tension that has held us.

It is not when things are going smoothly, that we need to know His pleasantness, but when all around is in a whirl and in unrest, then, if we go into our secret closet and shut the door; if we get still before Him, His pleasantness will steal upon us and He will comfort us as friend comforteth friend. Yea, manifold more than any friend could comfort us. It is then we receive grace to say of every persecution or cause of unrest and distress, "This does not concern me; it is no affair of mine; He will take care of it." And as we look away from the things that are not pleasant, and behold Him who is "pleasant," the rest and peace of God that passeth all understanding, shall enter into our souls.

There is but one place where a human heart can find food and rest, that is in Him who is the Bread from Heaven. There is but one place where there is holy quietness and pleasantness, that is in Him who is the source of all quietness and confidence, of all rest and pleasantness.

"Also our couch is green." He makes us to lie down in *green* pastures. He does not bring us into pastures that are dried up and parched. The Great Shepherd does not lead us in pastures where there are nettles and thistles, where the grass is scarce and sickly, where there is anything that will make the sheep sick or weak. He opens up to us the Word of God; He points out to us His exceeding great and precious promises; and we rest upon the Word of God, which He is ever quickening within us, and which He keeps fresh from His own hidden springs.

It is a pasture that is cool, fragrant and nourishing. We rest in His everlasting arms and find that His mercies and lovingkindnesses are new every morning and fresh every evening. "This is the rest and this is the refreshing," that we have in the very heat of the day, in the hottest part of the day. He would have us lie down upon a couch that is always green and fresh, which is fragrant and watered.

1:17. **"The beams of our house are cedars, and our rafters are firs."** The bride is speaking of the eternal house, which the Bridegroom has planned, and which He is building for Himself and her; and it is here that she has found rest. First, there are the beams; those heavy timbers that form the foundation, and which uphold the superstructure. Then there are the rafters, which support the covering of the house. The beams are made of cedars, which are an emblem of the pure, spotless manhood of Jesus Christ; and the rafters are made of the red fir, which is the emblem of the Blood and of the Atonement.

When the permanent Jewish Tabernacle was built, all the

wood was of the cedar. The cedar is a figure of the manhood of Jesus Christ. It is the hardest, most durable wood, and in it no worm will work, neither will rot destroy it. This is also true of the fragrant, red fir. These two kinds of wood are used to symbolize Christ and His redemptive work.

The beams, which form the foundation of this heavenly habitation, and which uphold the rafters, are the pure humanity of Jesus Christ. "Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death He might bring to naught him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. . . . Wherefore it behooved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren, that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (Heb. 2:14-17).

The first step in His redemptive work, was becoming a man. Only as He became a man could He die for the world; and this was the foundation of the Atonement. His pure, spotless manhood was the beams which had to be laid before the superstructure could go up; and before God could finish this house which He is building for Himself, this eternal habitation in the Spirit built out of living stones.

Not until these beams of His pure humanity were laid, could He go up to the cross and die, thus laying the rafters which cover the whole building. The rafters are of fir, that hard, durable wood, which shows forth Christ's redemptive work through its red color, and symbolizes the eternal character of His redemptive work by its hard, durable quality. The atoning work of Jesus Christ is over us all the time, supported by the beams of His spotless human nature. And through Christ and His finished work upon the Cross, is built the New Jerusalem; He and His church make up the "House." "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious, ye also, as living stones, are

built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 2:4, 5). This is the house which God has purposed for us to dwell in, even our Lord; and we are the living stones from which God is making a house for Himself to dwell in.

We feed at His table upon the Bread that God has sent down from Heaven, our Home-country; we drink of the New Wine of the Kingdom. We recline upon the green pastures of His precious Word and the many promises which are found therein. We rest beside the still waters and drink abundantly of the water of life. It is not only *His* house, it is *our* house; and we dwell in it and are a part of it. This is the house which God is preparing; for "We are no more strangers and sojourners, but we are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief corner stone; in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit" (Eph. 2:19-22).

Not only has God been our dwelling place in all generations; but He is building out of us a house for Himself, which is supported by the cedar wood of Christ's pure, spotless human nature; and the rafters that support the covering are of the fir of His finished work on Calvary. "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid which is Christ" (I Cor. 3:11). Truly, "The beams of our house are cedars, and our rafters are firs." Oh, how our hearts rejoice as we remember: "That if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens. For verily in this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from Heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked."

CHAPTER IX

PREËMINENCE OF CHRIST AND HIS BRIDE. 2:1-3.

2:1. **"I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys."** "Sharon" and "the Valleys" were the most fertile districts of the land of Israel, and all that grew there was in great luxuriance and perfection. Coming after the descriptions of our Lord as our Shepherd and our protection, there is deep significance in this setting forth of His character and relation to us as Myrrh, Henna-blossoms, the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valleys.

He is portraying Himself as the source of all joy and delight, of all beauty and fragrance to His bride. The rose is the most beautiful of all flowering shrubs, and yet is not valuable for its usefulness. It has only its beauty and fragrance to recommend it. All the value there is in the rose, is the pleasure it brings to those who look upon it. There is an attitude that many of God's children take toward Him, which is not the highest; and they do not receive as much as they would if they beheld Him in every relation in which He is waiting to reveal Himself to them.

Though we bring to Him all our cares and ask Him for all that we need, though we tell Him of all our difficulties—and He is able to take care of them all—he wants us to let Him be "pleasant" to us; He is waiting to reveal Himself to us as the "Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valleys." He would have us see in Him more than the source of our supplies. He would have us delight ourselves in Him and not in His gifts.

Oh that God may give to us the grace and spiritual vision to see Jesus Christ as the beautiful, fragrant Rose of Sharon;

to have Him, the divine Rose, sweet to our souls; to sit before Him and let His fragrance settle down upon us! When He says He is the Rose of Sharon, it means that as the rose is preëminent among the garden flowers, so He is preëminent in beauty and fragrance. We cannot see Him in this light when we only look upon Him as somebody from whom we are trying to get something, and whom we need to help us along.

Let us commune with Him and love Him, let us talk with Him and sit before Him in stillness until we are ravished by His fragrance as the "Rose of Sharon." Though He heals all our diseases and supplies all our needs, though He fights all our battles and delivers us from the hand of all our enemies; from time to time, let us get our eyes off of His gracious deeds and fix them upon Him alone. Let us see Him as the "Rose of Sharon" and remember how altogether lovely He is, apart from all His acts to usward. Let us cry to Him that we may know Him as we have never known Him before. Let us rejoice that, apart from all His gracious acts, He gives Himself to us to delight our spiritual eyes and refresh our souls.

When He takes His place in our lives as the Rose of Sharon, every other relation will be deepened and become more precious; and we shall receive more from Him than we have ever been able to get before. Sometimes, when I am holding on in prayer concerning the Lord's work, concerning my own needs and the filling out of my life, when I am prevailing for the needs of others, I hear His voice saying to my heart: "Am I sweet to your heart? Am I beautiful in your eyes? If I do naught of all this you are asking, shall I be beautiful and sweet to you? Above all that you ask and all that I do, I would have you experience and rejoice in my beauty and fragrance. Then all other things shall be added to you."

He is waiting to be the adored object of our admiration. He would have our spiritual eyes anointed and the love in our

hearts so unselfish, that we shall be ravished by His beauty, which can only be revealed by close contact. In the rose is all beauty and fragrance, in Him is all beauty and fragrance.

He is also "the Lily of the Valleys," that white, spotless lily that grows down in the fertile valleys; the lily, which is so humble and yet so stately, so full of perfume and yet hidden away. It was when our precious Lord emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant; when He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, that He became the Lily of the Valleys. Who knows the depth into which He went, and the suffering through which He passed? Who can fathom the waves and billows that went over His head as He went down into the darkness and brought back His own?

He would have the bride rejoice in the goodly fragrance of His Name and oils, but He would also have her see Him as the pure Lily of the Valleys. He would have her see His humility and behold in Him the beauty of that lowly flower that grows in the Valleys. He would have her smell the delicate fragrance of that meek and lowly spirit, which had its source in Him and was manifested as He learned obedience by the things He suffered; which sent forth fragrance before the Father when He was reviled and He answered not a word. This humble plant is found growing in the fertile Valleys, but its blossoms are found in the courts of Heaven.

2:2. **"As a lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters."** The Lord would have her follow in His footsteps; and as she beholds Him in His beauty, in His fragrance, and in His humility, she hears Him say: "As I am, so are ye in the world. He that saith that He abideth in Me ought himself also to walk even as I walked." To be like unto Him, she must go down into the fertile Valleys, and there must she abide. She must draw strength and nourishment from the hidden springs and the rich soil of His Word, and His life must flow into her until she blossoms out in His likeness.

The Bridegroom not only tells of His own attributes, but He again shows forth His love for the bride, and describes her with the same figure which He has just used to describe Himself. All the beauty of the daughters of men, could not be used to describe her who is the bride of the Lamb; and who, through Him, has received adoption unto God.

All other daughters are but thorns, and they are surrounded by thorns; but the beautiful lily has no thorns growing upon her. In her words, there is nothing which is sharp, and wounds her Lord and those around her. There are no unkind actions growing upon this plant that is being prepared for the Garden of Heaven. There are no unworthy, uplifted attributes found upon the one whom God will choose as the bride of His Son. He has invited many to be the bride; but though many have received the invitation, only a few will He choose. In the Song of Solomon, the descriptions of the virgins who make up this company, must apply not only collectively, but individually to all who find a place in that blest company.

He has just told her that He is the Lily of the Valleys, then He describes His bride as a lily among thorns; harmless, yet upright and beautiful; spotless and fragrant. As He is, so must she be. He would have her conformed to His image, with His every attribute adorning her and with every likeness to Him perfected; with every perfume and beauty manifested upon her and in her life. As He is the Lily of the Valleys, so would He have His spouse a lily. He would have her so perfectly partaking of this likeness, that she shall be as a lily among thorns. She must be harmless, yet steadfast. She must be humble, yet standing in pure dignity. She must be upright and beautiful, contending earnestly for the Faith once for all delivered unto the saints. She must be spotless and fragrant, each lily in the company standing for His glory and His delight alone.

All that would wound, all that is unworthy, all that is

uplifted must find no place in her. She must be tender, worthy in His worthiness, humble before God and man; and thus she grows more beautiful and harmless, more and more to His glory. It is as He leads her down into the Valleys, where she is hidden away from the eyes of man, and where the living waters flow, that she is nourished and becomes as the lily. Only down there is the soil fertile; only there is the moisture found that flows down from the Everlasting Hills. Only down in the Valleys of humility, of meekness, of lowliness can these eternal lilies be found.

As our precious Lord emptied Himself of His glory, so must we be emptied of all that would hinder us carrying out the will of God. He went down into these Valleys of humility and depths of suffering, that He might plant in the Valleys pure lilies like unto Himself. He ascended to Heaven that He might transplant these lilies from the earthly wilderness to the heavenly terraces, where they will forever bloom in the Garden of the Lord. Down in the Valleys does He tend and water them. He waters them every moment: lest any hurt them, He keeps them night and day.

If our Heavenly Bridegroom should come today to see whether we were found among those whom He has just described in this second verse, I wonder what He would find in each one of us. Does this description apply to us? Would He find the thorns all gone from our lives? Are we pure and spotless, are we gentle and longsuffering, do we consider one another to provoke unto love and good works? Are we as wise as serpents, and yet withal as harmless as doves? Do those who look upon us, expecting to find the fruit of the Spirit and the likeness to the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valleys, find only leaves and see no fruit? Are those who come near us, pierced by the thorns in our lives and speech?

Do you know where we find humility? It is down in the Valleys, not on the highest mountain peaks. If we follow our

Beloved down there, He will adorn the hidden man of the heart with the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit. When we catch glimpses of the inward adorning, how our souls long to go down into every valley into which our Lord would lead us. As the hart pants after the water brooks, so our souls pant for the waters of life; and it is down in these Valleys of lowliness and abasement, that fountains of living water are found gushing forth from the Rock. These Valleys are ever watered from Eternal springs, and the soil is rich and fertile.

There is a precious truth in here, which seems like a contradiction. The deeper we go into the Valleys of humiliation, the higher we go into the Mount of God. The more we abide in these precious Valleys, the higher we go into the Mount of Revelation and dwell there. It is by going down into this place, that we become like Him, and are lifted higher and higher into His presence.

May the Holy Spirit bring home to our hearts every characteristic of the bride that is brought out from the first verse to the last verse in the Song of Solomon. And may the searchlight of God be turned upon us until we see how much or how little we are measuring up to the portrait of the bride of the Lamb, which the Holy Spirit has pictured for our guidance and for our admonition.

2:3. **"As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons. I sat under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste."** The word, "apple," in this place, means orange, pomegranate, citron, as well as apple, and is applied to this entire family of fruit trees. Though one searched through all the forests of earth, he would not find one fruit tree; and though one searches through the whole forest of humanity, there is not one tree that can bear any fruit excepting that which is poisonous and bitter. "There is none other name under heaven given

among men whereby we must be saved," excepting the Name of Jesus. Before the bride found the one fruitful Tree, Christ, she searched throughout the forest, seeking life, seeking food, seeking fruit; but upon no tree, did she find anything but leaves.

How she searched through the forest to find a tree that had fruit on it! How she looked around for a tree that could give and sustain life. Weary and worn, discouraged and hungry, she went from forest to forest, from tree to tree. She looked for peace, but she found it not; she looked for happiness, but she found it not; she looked for a "Daysman" among the forest of men, but she found none. Neither in man's theories and teaching, nor in their philosophy did she find peace. Neither in her own works nor in those of any other did she find rest. How she traveled and looked for salvation and could not find it.

At last, by the guidance and grace of God, she came to Him who is the only "Apple Tree" in the whole forest of humanity; the Tree upon which all kinds of fruit grow. She came and tasted and found that the Lord was good. She has partaken of the fruit of the Tree of life; she has found fruit, refreshing and sweet, both nourishing as food and satisfying to thirst. She has found the Tree upon which there is every manner of fruit, and fruit all the time; the greatest of all being that of eternal life. Then there is wisdom, righteousness, love, joy, peace, and every fruit that prepares her for God and Heaven; for Eternity.

Have you come to the one Apple Tree and partaken of eternal life? Is your soul longing for more joy to well up within you? Do you want the love of God to be perfected within your life? Do you want to be filled with longsuffering, with faith and hope? Then come and feed upon this one Tree, Christ. This is the Tree that was in the bosom of the Father throughout eternal ages. This is the Tree that was

planted on earth when Jesus hung on the Cross of Calvary; and God planted It here that we might have access to It, and upon It we find all we need.

How we rejoice that we have proven there is fruit upon Him; and by feeding upon Him, we too bear fruit to His glory. He is our Storehouse, He is the only fruitful Tree, and we can get nothing outside of Him, but we can get everything in Him. The more we feed upon Him, the more we abide in Him. The more He feeds and nourishes us, the more He becomes manifested in our lives to the glory of God. There is none other like Him among all the sons of men, neither among the archangels in Heaven.

"I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste." Not only is He the one fruitful Tree in all the forest of the sons of men, but it is only under this Tree that man finds refuge from the wrath of God, which rested upon the world because of sin and God's broken law. It is only under the shadow of this Tree, that we find protection from, and victory over the enemy. Christ has interposed Himself between us, and the wrath and condemnation which were our due, and which rested upon us; He alone can shelter us from the sentence which has been pronounced upon us because of sin and disobedience.

The bride is not *standing* under His shadow, which would show a lack of rest and permanency; but she has *sat down* under His shadow, which shows uninterrupted abiding in Him, and feeding upon Him. It is when she has been drawn near enough to experience a close touch with Him, not only at times, but a continual communion and abiding in Him, that she partakes of His precious fruit and is refreshed in her soul by deep draughts of life more abundant. She need fear no foe if she remains under His shadow for in that place, and there alone, she is safe. There she finds food, shelter and all she needs.

It is when the bride dwells in the secret place of the Most High, that she abides under the shadow of the Almighty. It is when sitting under His shadow, that she finds delight; it is when she takes refuge in Him, that she is hidden away from the enemy, from the plottings of men, from the strife of tongues, from the heat of the day. It is a wonderful thing to make the shadow of the Almighty our dwelling place. It is a wonderful experience to sit down under His shadow, and let Him be our Shade on our right hand, our Covert from the heat of the day, our Rock in a weary land, our High Tower and our Fortress. He will not suffer our feet to be moved; and it is when abiding under this Tree, that we can claim all the promises of God, and become partakers in the divine nature. "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

The longer we sit under His shadow and trust in the protection which it affords, the greater becomes our confidence and delight. It matters not how the devil roars and rages, we know that he cannot touch us in our safe Retreat. Though evil-doers come upon us to eat up our flesh, our adversaries and foes, they shall stumble and fall. Though a host encamp against us, our hearts shall not fear. Though war should rise against us, even then will we be confident, because we are dwelling in Him all the days of our lives, beholding His beauty and inquiring in His temple. In the day of trouble, we are kept secretly in this Pavilion; He lifts us up upon the Rock, and our heads are lifted up above our enemies round about us.

It is not only to find the one Apple Tree, but it is to take up our abode under its shadow. It is not only to taste of its fruit, but it is to eat and be filled with all the fruit that grows upon this divine Tree; it is to feed upon Him continually until we are strong in Him, and in the power of His might.

O wonderful Tree that dwelt in the bosom of the Father throughout eternal ages! O precious Tree that was first

planted upon earth on the Hill of Calvary, of whose fruit millions have partaken, and whose fruit is ours as we partake of it through faith! O eternal fruit, which He will gather for Eternity, as He leads many sons to Glory and brings them home to His Father's house! How sweet is this fruit to our taste, how satisfying is every morsel of which we partake! And we can feed to the full for the fruit is ever growing, ever being revealed to us, always perfect, and never grows old nor decays.

He is the beautiful Rose of Sharon, which gladdens and beautifies every desert and wilderness, which refreshes us in the times of our greatest trials and suffering for His sake. He is the Lily of the Valleys, which is the purest, the most fragrant and yet the humblest among the flowers. But He is not only the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valleys, He is the one fruitful Tree among all the trees of the forest. He is the source of all beauty, and the Storehouse of all fragrance, purity and humility. He is the only supply of all food and nourishment, He is the only Fountain of living water, He is the Water of life. He is the shade upon our right hand, we sit down under His shadow with great delight and His fruit is sweet to our taste.

CHAPTER X

THE BANQUETING HOUSE. 2:4-6.

2:4. **"He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love."** Many times, the dear children of God, not understanding the significance of the "Banqueting House," have thought that the Lord has brought them to the Banqueting House when He has not. They apply this wonderful Scripture to every blessing and experience, to every anointing and joy. This is like naming a small pond, the Atlantic Ocean. It is a very significant fact, of which we should take notice, that this is the only time in the Song of Solomon where the bride is brought into the Banqueting House. It means far more than many of the children of God have apprehended.

We can see how wonderful has been the soul's progress toward God during the first part of this precious book. In the beginning, she has had some precious experiences with the Lord. She has longed for Him and for a closer walk with her Beloved. She has had sweet experiences with Him, and He has brought her into some of His chambers. He has put a hunger in her soul for Him, and a cry that she may be drawn to run after Him. He has drawn her, and she has run after Him like the steeds in Pharaoh's chariots. He has brought her to His table, which He Himself has spread in green pastures and beside still waters.

It is not a small thing to have this sweet intercourse at the table of communion, where she tells what He is to her, and He tells what she is to Him. If the soul goes on, this precious communion table merges into the Banqueting House. But there are many of God's dear children who come thus far, and

never go on into the fuller, deeper experience. They are so filled with joy when they first sit with the King at His table, that they mistake this beginning of intimate fellowship and communion, for the "Banquet of Wine."

It is most important that we should see the path over which the bride came to the Banqueting House; also that we should remember, that though her Beloved brought her to the Banqueting House, she was not yet perfected when she had this experience. With the one who is going through and will be in the bride, it seems that very often, the Lord gives her this experience in the early part of her Heavenward journey, in order to cheer and encourage her to press on until she reaches the goal.

The same hand that was with her from the first, is leading her on; and her Beloved now brings her into the most intimate communion and fellowship with Himself that a soul can have. This passage can only be a description of such an experience as is granted to those alone who will go all the way with the Lord.

All who are redeemed must enter into some of the chambers of the King. All who are redeemed have more or less desire to go on with the Lord and to know Him better. All who are redeemed sit at His table in the green pastures; though they may not abide there, though they may partake of but little and have only a little Spikenard to give forth fragrance. At times, every soul that is saved, beholds Christ as lovely and desirable, as the only source of life, light and salvation. But only those virgins who go all the way with Him and abandon themselves to Him, does He take into His Banqueting House.

The bride first supped with Him out in the green pastures beside the still waters, but now He spreads before her a banquet. His Banqueting House is that relation with Him, into which He brings those who have followed hard after Him and are counting all things but loss for the excellency of the

knowledge of Him; those who are willing to go all the way with Him, no matter where it brings them or what it means. It is a foretaste of the revelation of Himself and His everlasting love, which only Eternity can fully reveal.

This is the espousal banquet, which He gives to her as His spouse. It is a banquet of wine, where she drinks to the full of the New Wine of the Kingdom, where she is filled until she would almost cry that He should stay His hand, lest her life might go out because of the exceeding great revelation of Himself, and the preciousness of His love which He pours in upon her.

One virgin of the bride was caught up even to the third Heaven, into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for man to utter. And by reason of the exceeding greatness of the revelations, he received a thorn in the flesh that he should not be exalted overmuch.

The bride sees His banner floating over her, which is His own Name, "Love." It was through love that He conquered her and carried her away a love captive for Himself. "We love because He first loved us." "While we were yet weak, Christ died for the ungodly." "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." He went out into the darkness to find her and deliver her from the dominion of sin and Satan, and He brought her back after redeeming her by His own precious blood. Because of the great love wherewith He loved her even when she was dead through her trespasses and sins, He made her alive through Christ (Eph. 2:4-9).

Not only does Christ's banner over us show that we have become His through His great love and the work that He wrought, but the protection of His banner is ours. It is the banner of the country of which we are citizens; and the King of that country will avenge all injuries done those who are under His banner. Whoever opposes and fights those who are under the banner of God, is opposing and fighting GOD.

No foe, either spiritual or human, dares to approach us or attack us when we have over us the banner of the King of Glory, the God of Heaven and earth. It is when the banner of God is not manifested, that the flesh and the enemy dare to approach, for they are not afraid to attack us in ourselves. But when the love of God is resting upon us, the foe knows that we are the property of God, that He is fighting our battles, and that the protection of His banner is upon us; then does he fear to attack us.

It was so with our precious Lord. Many times when they would have taken Him, He went forth out of their hands because of a mysterious fear upon them, which they did not understand. It was God's unseen banner of love and approval resting upon Jesus Christ that brought this fear upon His enemies. When the hour had fully come in which He was to be offered up, and God gradually withdrew His protection until it appeared that He was not with Him, then this fear departed; and those who hated Christ reviled Him and did with Him as they would. Even on the cross, when the face of the Father was turned from Him, they said: "He trusted on God; let Him deliver Him now, if He desireth Him" (Matt. 27:43).

Do you know, if you are walking in obedience and humility, that the banner of your Beloved is floating over you all the time? When you are going through the hardest trials, if your eyes were anointed and you looked up, you would discern His banner, "Love," floating, shining, gleaming through the darkness. We do not always see it and we do not always remember that it is there, but it is ever over us. In the night seasons, in the day seasons; in the dark places, in the light places; in the hard places, in the easy places, the banner of our God is still floating above us.

Not only is His banner over us, but His angels are encamped round about us, His armies are stationed so as to

protect His own. And where His people and armies are, there His banner is floating. Over the dwellings of His people, is the banner of the King of Glory. It matters not how poor and shabby or how large and spacious these dwellings may be, if the elect live there, the banner of their King is ever floating.

2:5 **"Stay ye me with flagons** (or "raisins"), **refresh me with apples; for I am sick from love."** Not when we are following the Lord afar off do we have such hunger and desire for Him as is characterized by being sick from love. It is when we are drinking deep of the Wine of the Kingdom and feeding in fullness upon Him, that the yearnings and cravings increase unto real soul-sickness for our Beloved.

There is a way in which our Lord would have us sick from love for Him; and when we have this intense love and desire, nothing can satisfy but to get closer to Him. It is then that He brings us into His Banqueting House, and He satisfies us with such revelations of Himself and of His love as ravish our souls, and we cry with increasing desire and hunger: "Stay ye me with flagons, refresh me with apples: for I am sick from love." It is at this time, that our love is drawn out to Him as never before. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God."

The bride does not ask Him to withdraw the revelation of Himself and His love, but to strengthen her that she may endure, not only these, but even greater revelations. She cries to God in His tripersonality ("Stay *ye* me with flagons") that He will make her stronger by giving her greater draughts of the Wine of the Kingdom, by giving her more abundantly the apples from the one fruitful Tree, Christ. It is as she partakes of the fruits of the Christ-life that she is strengthened and drawn into a place of deeper revelation of her Lord and of His love for her.

"O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee: my soul

thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee, in a dry and weary land where no water is. . . . When I remember Thee upon my bed and meditate on Thee in the night watches. For Thou hast been my help, and in the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice. My soul followeth hard after Thee: Thy right hand upholdeth me." (Ps. 63:1 ff.) There are many times when we are fainting in our souls for a fuller approach to God, fainting in our souls to know His love better. We have a longing, which is like a real swoon in our whole beings, that we may pass out from the place in which we are, and be lost in the love of God. We are spiritually sick because of our longing and love for Jesus.

Do you know that one reason God's children do not feel this spiritual hunger any more than they do, is because they have not taken the steps that went before? With the things of God, there is a progression just as there is in any school; and if we do not take the first steps, we shall not take the last steps. Every lesson we skip or neglect, we shall have to go back and learn before we shall be able to go on; for every advance step is a foundation for the next advance step. The reason that many of God's children have never been brought into the Banqueting House of the King, the reason many lack power and are not where they should be, is because they have not taken the steps as they came to them. They have not perfectly endured that which God called them to pass through, in order that they might reach this place upon which we are meditating in this precious passage.

Some of God's people try to leap into the Banqueting House experience; but if they have this experience granted them, it is only when they have taken the first steps of obedience, abandonment, and devotion to their Lord. There is a precious, and peculiar secret concerning our relation to our Lord; the more we feed upon Him and draw near Him, the stronger we become. As each new revelation of Him and His preciousness

is given us, like Daniel, we find that our comeliness is turned to corruption, and we have no strength. But His hand always touches us and lifts us up, so that we can endure all He would give; and we are strengthened by the presence of the Lord, so that His presence may become more manifested.

Only as the bride is made strong in Him by feeding upon the food which comes from Him, can she enter in and endure such exceeding great revelations of His love. But to the devoted soul, the heart's cry is, "Bring me more of this New Wine of the Kingdom, which has made me sick from love, for I would drink it to the full. Bring me more of the fruit from this divine Apple Tree, that I may eat to the full, and be refreshed to endure greater revelations." She has already been sitting under this Tree and has found its fruit sweet to her taste, but she would evermore abide there under its shade and eat and drink abundantly.

2:6. **"His left hand is under my head, and His right hand doth embrace me."** It is He who ministers to the bride and gives to her the needed support; He holds her up by His left hand, which is God's hand in His less manifest working. Some expositors take the meaning of the left hand to be the hand of God's judgment and wrath; which, in the place of being over and upon man, has been put under him through the work of Jesus Christ. The most precious significance, however, is that it is the less visible working of God in His providences, support, and care; in His upholding and undertaking for us in temporal and common ways, and in all the ways in which many of God's children do not see the hand of God.

It is the left hand of God under our heads that sustains and supports us when the billows are running high and the winds are contrary and raging. We are not always conscious that it is His hand that keeps us from sinking, for the working of His precious left hand is the least seen. But without that,

we could not receive all He would give and do for us with His right hand.

The right hand is the hand of manifest grace, inward love, and joy in Christ, the smile of His approval, the hand with which He molds and fashions the bride. The left hand holds us fast while the right hand deals and works upon the clay of the earthen vessel. The embracing of His hand is so precious, as He lets His love fall upon us like dew, as He leads us into deeper revelations of Himself and of that which He has prepared for us. As we see the King in His beauty and behold the land of far distances that lies before us, we are truly overcome with soul-longing for that beautiful land.

This support and embracing of the Bridgroom's hands, are not always the unalloyed bliss that many think. Sometimes it means such pressure and shaking as only His left hand could hold us steady in. It is the working of His right and left hands which brings us to perfection. How many times God brings us up to something, which, it seems, we cannot go through; but unseen by us, His left hand holds us fast. How we should praise God for that left hand, which sustains and supports us, which comforts and encourages us, which holds us steady when God puts us on the wheel. How we praise God for this precious hidden left hand, which holds us as God's wheel turns round and as His right hand molds and shapes us; as He perfects that which concerneth us and gets us ready to shine forth in His image.

Let us see and not despise His left hand; let us yield to His right hand though He would use the knife upon us and pour the wine into the wound; for He will then pour in the oil and soothe us; He may wound us, but He will heal us. Our hearts have rejoiced as we have remembered that "He will hold us fast," and this appears to us as unalloyed bliss and joy. Let us not forget, however, that He not only holds us fast and comforts us in trial, but He holds us fast in the fiery furnace,

and on the swiftly moving wheel of His purifying and molding processes. How many times we would get out of His hands if He did not hold us fast when He puts us into the purifying furnace, out of which we would take ourselves if it were possible. It is His precious unseen left hand that tenderly holds us still as the dross is being consumed.

When we begin to lay hold of that for which Christ laid hold on us, His embracing brings love and tears of adoration, as we behold our own unworthiness, as we see our shortage. We not only behold Him in His beauty, but we see ourselves in our blackness. It is when we enter into the most intimate touch with Him, that He lets us see Him as He is; and only as we see Him as He is, can we see ourselves as we are. Only in this place, can we behold that which must be done in us before we shall be like unto Him.

Many of God's children never enter into the relation which is here set forth, for there is a condition and a price to pay which only the chosen few will meet. They have gone into some chambers and think that they have been in the Banqueting House; they have sat at the table of communion and think that it was the Banquet of Wine, the espousal banquet.

The one who will enter in, is that one who will cast himself upon the Lord in utter abandonment, joyfully suffering persecution and keeping step with his Lord. Though his name is cast out as evil and he be despised and rejected as Christ was despised and rejected, he will lie upon the left hand of God's providences and support, and will be passive under the right hand of His loving dealing and caressing. And God will take him into a place which is sacred between him and his Lord. He will not go about and tell others of that which passed in the Banqueting House, it is too sacred.

CHAPTER XI

"JEHOVAH IS IN HIS HOLY TEMPLE: LET ALL THE EARTH KEEP SILENCE BEFORE HIM." 2:7.

2:7. **"I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes or by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love until He please."** Although the children of God are praying to be prepared for the Coming of Jesus Christ, few have entered into a realization of the importance of holding fast that which God has given them, lest any man take their crown.

When the Lord draws us through His dealing and His everlasting love and mercy, to go on with Him more closely than we have ever done; and we come into closer touch with Him than we have ever had before, we hardly know how to abide in that place; neither do we see the necessity of walking softly before Him. Thus, many times, we lose that which He has done for us; and if we would regain it, we must go over the same path again.

Although there are mountain peaks of revelation, which God gives us when we are brought into a closer relation with the Lord, He does not intend that this experience should be temporary, but permanent and increasing. How many times we have not walked softly and have lost that which He has given us; and which we could have kept if we had humbled ourselves and remained on the watchtower, with our hearts before Him in earnest prayer. Just a movement of the flesh will disturb the relation into which He has brought us.

How vividly and forcibly, does this warning of the bride

express the care we must take not to grieve the Spirit, not to stop the working of our Lord within us. The bride, because of her more intimate intercourse with her Lord, begins to realize how carefully she must walk if she would have that fellowship unbroken, and not hinder His dealing. As cautiously as the hunter follows the roe, so must she live and walk. Not only this; every relation must be brought into conformity to this careful walk.

No animal is as difficult to hunt as the roe or the hind. Only the hunter who has been trained, knows how quiet and careful he must be, how cautiously he must take every step, if he would capture one of these animals. Sounds, unheard by other ears, are quickly heard by the roe or the hind; and they will dart away so swiftly, that the hunter ofttimes does not see them go.

It is with greater care and quietness, that the bride must take each step if she would not disturb the quiet rest and abiding of her Beloved in the soul; which, if it were unbroken, would cause her to go on in leaps and bounds to the very best God has for her. How often has the presence of our Lord been so sweet, and we have been so melted down and ravished by the revelations of His love, that all else is less than refuse when beheld in the light of those moments we spend alone with Him whom our soul loveth. Then He is disturbed by a word, a careless moment, a heedless action, or because we are taken up with something else (though it be some necessary duty); and before we know how it happened, He has withdrawn or hidden Himself. We see His footsteps and know that He has really been with us, but He has faded from our spiritual vision, and we are left desolate.

What a wonderful showing forth of the only way in which we can walk with Christ, and so live that there shall be no ups and downs in our lives! How little have we entered into the meaning or realization of "a close walk with God." Very

little have we comprehended how softly we must walk, if we would be conscious of the presence and working of the Holy Lamb of God, and of the Holy Dove with us all the time. We must lose sight of all else; we must refuse to hear or see anything or any one but Him; we must walk so carefully and obediently, and so put away all the noise and clatter of our own desires and flesh, that nothing will waken our Beloved.

Many times we seek for a deeper experience with our Lord; and when it is granted us in a measure, we immediately begin to rejoice over it with such self-elation, that, when we look, He is gone. All who approach as near to Him as is set forth in this portion of the Song of Solomon, have followed with much pain and longing, with long delay of the revelation. They should prayerfully ask God that they may apprehend how to walk, so that they may never be obliged to seek Him in contrition because they have been unfaithful or careless.

Perhaps the Lord will meet you in a most blessed way, and He will talk with you face to face. You hear His voice, and He talks with you and floods you with such glory and joy, and such a revelation of Himself, that it seems you can never get away from this place of privilege and revelation. But you do get away from it. God is going to bring us to the place where we shall not drift up and down, but we shall live in His presence and walk in the Spirit all the time, and nothing shall be able to mar or disturb our relation with our Lord.

It is so easy for us to grieve the Spirit, to wound and grieve our Lord. If we were a small part as careful to please the Lord as we have been at some time in our lives to please some person whom we have loved, we should have been walking with Him in uninterrupted communion today, in the place of having so many ups and downs. When we really love any one it is no bondage to please them; and it is a real sorrow when we are unable to do this.

There have been too many who have followed after Him

like the steeds in Pharaoh's chariots, who have even entered the Banqueting House; but when such entrance has been vouchsafed to them, they have become elated and uplifted. They have taken it as a permanent bestowment, and have not at all apprehended that it requires a more careful walk to abide in the place they have reached, and more caution to keep their love still abiding with them, than was needed to arrive at this place of privilege.

Many of us have sought a deeper entrance into communion with our Lord; we have sought a deeper revelation of the pure truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ; we have asked for Him to abide within us and manifest Himself more continuously. We have asked many things of Him and persevered in our petitions until He has given, or commenced to give us that for which we have prayed. But when we have sought hard and diligently and see the answer in sight, we begrudge the care and diligence that are essential to retaining that which He has given us.

"The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting" (Prov. 12:27). How slothful we are in even seeking for that which God is holding out to us; and then how slothful we are in roasting and partaking of the game we have taken in hunting. Game not roasted, not subjected to fire and partaken of, spoils on one's hands; the only purpose a conscientious hunter has in hunting, is to get something to eat that he may grow strong thereby.

It is the same with all that we seek and receive from our dear Lord. The supreme purpose God has in drawing us on, the supreme purpose we should have in striving to enter into a more intimate knowledge of the Lord and of the Truth, is not that such privileges may be unused and unroasted, but that we may roast and partake of them. It is that they may give us strength and life, that they may become flesh in us and be manifested to the glory of His Name.

It is here, that each virgin of the bride of the Lamb must walk softly; here must she be clothed in humility; here must she fully apprehend that it is all of grace and not because of any worthiness or of anything in herself. She must realize that she is not a favorite with Christ, and what He has given her may be lost more easily than any earthly treasure. She must also realize that she can dwell in the constant enjoyment of this close, intimate relation if she will.

Charge all motives and movements of self, all idle, unworthy thoughts within you, not to move nor waken your Love. Adjure every desire, purpose, feeling within you, demand of every one who touches your life (though you may not say it to them in so many words), that they shall be in your life, as the hunter who is following the roe or the hind of the field.

Why has not the Lord a greater place in your life and in mine? Because we have not walked softly, because we have grieved and driven Him away. It is not only the outbreaking sins that will stop His working, but the careless words and the little things will hinder Him just as effectually.

Many times we have gotten down before the Lord, and He has brought us into a place where it seemed that nothing could ever be the same, and that *we* could never be the same again. They never would have been the same if we had walked as softly as the bride beseeches everybody around her, and everything without and within her being, to walk. But we did not walk softly, and we lost that which we had received. *We became the same again.*

One of the most precious object lessons and most solemn warnings to be found in the Song of Solomon, is drawn from the Bridegroom's sudden disappearance from the vision and presence of the bride. He will be with her in such intimacy and preciousness, and almost immediately He is gone. Thus it is with our dear Lord in His dealings.

Not only should His presence be sweet, not only should we walk softly when He is blessing our souls, but we should walk softly, humbly, when He convicts and deals with us. The greatest blessing God can bestow upon us is to convict us when we need it. If He did not show us the places in our lives which are not pleasing to Him, how could we be made strong and put away that which is not like Him.

We have not valued God's dealings and the indwelling of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit as we should. We have taken it as something we are to enjoy, and we have let it become common. It is not a commonplace thing for God to deal with us; for Jesus Christ to dwell within us by faith; for the Holy Spirit to take up His abode in our bodies, revealing Jesus Christ, convicting, teaching, and working in your soul and in mine. However many blessings and dealings you have had, look back and remember that the God of Heaven and earth, the God who inhabits Eternity, was working upon you.

Remember that even a little sound of earth and of the flesh, a little getting out of the Spirit, will stop His working. As you feel the wooing of the Spirit and the moving of the Lord in your life, walk so softly that His working, His slumber, His dealings, His manifestations, shall in no wise be disturbed. How do you know, if you are careless and grieve Him when He begins to deal with you, that He will ever begin that same dealing again in the same way?

Not only adjure, but watch your own heart, that no noise nor distraction shall enter in to disturb your Beloved; let no one nor anything come between you and Him. When once He has been grieved and withdraws, it is not so easy to beseech Him and to prevail upon Him to return in the same way in which He was dwelling with you before. Do not stir nor waken Him. Put off *your* flesh and words, *your* actions and desires. Put off all that would disturb Him. Put away every relation with those about you that would affect you and dis-

turb Him in any way. There is a significance and a solemn warning in the fact, that this is the only place in the whole book where the bride is found in the Banqueting House.

All anxious care will disturb Him and attract your attention so that your eyes will wander from Him. All self-seeking and self-assertion or self-justification will arouse and grieve Him. All complainings, questionings, doubts and fears will disturb His rest. Sometimes your devotions are distracted by the cares of life; and sometimes your devotions themselves, because they are full of fleshly energy and fervor, will waken your Beloved; and He will withdraw leaving you dry and barren. Let Him move when He pleases. If He would seek to deepen your faith and confidence by withdrawing, let it be done of His own good pleasure, and not because He has been disturbed.

WHEN YOU ARE ALONE, WATCH YOUR THOUGHTS that they may be fixed upon Him, and that there shall be nothing to grieve or disturb Him. Keep in touch with Him; not with anxious strain and effort, but in rest and quiet, in repose and communion, in submission and meditation. Listen for His voice, and worship Him with your whole being. WHEN YOU ARE WITH OTHERS, WATCH YOUR WORDS AS WELL AS YOUR THOUGHTS and keep your mind stayed upon Him. Even when the conversation about you is not conducive to the quiet of His presence, you will find, as you are watchful and mindful of Him, that you can be shut up with Him; and that He will direct all your words so that they will not disturb nor dishonor Him.

Sometimes, when He would work a deeper faith within us, He hides Himself from us for a moment; but this is very different from having Him withdraw because of our carelessness and indifference. When He is working in this way and hides His face that He may teach you—whether in light or darkness—to always behold Him by faith; if you have done nothing to

disturb Him, you may, "rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him." And that word, "rest," means "to be quiet unto." If He withdrew of Himself not through any fault of yours, and you are quiet unto the Lord, waiting patiently for Him, you will find that He will return to you in fuller vision and revelation than ever before.

This is the end of the first Canticle, which began with the bride's earnest longing and search for the Bridegroom, and closes with His presence, leaving the bride in the precious enjoyment of His love and favor.

Canticle Two. *Ch. 2:8 to 3:5*

CHAPTER XII

APPROACH OF THE BRIDEGROOM. 2:8, 9.

2:8. **"The voice of my Beloved! behold, He cometh, leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills."** There is a deep warning and a precious meaning in here for the upbuilding of our own souls. Between the seventh and eighth verses, the Bridegroom has withdrawn. We are not told whether He withdrew of Himself, or whether His withdrawal was caused by the carelessness and indifference of the bride. There are times when He withdraws or hides Himself that He may lead us into deeper depths of earnestness and abandonment. And there are times when we do not keep in touch with Him and are not quiet enough before Him, so that He can remain and work unhindered and undisturbed.

The closer we have approached to the Lord, the higher the place into which He has brought us, the more poignant is our grief when, through carelessness or inadvertence, we grieve Him so that He stops working. Whatever has caused His absence, the bride has been waiting and listening for His return. Some time has evidently elapsed between the seventh and eighth verses; and we can discern the weary moments of waiting through which she has passed, and the heartsickness, which has increased as she has watched for His appearing.

His appearance becomes more and more distinct, until we behold His form which was marred more than the sons of men; we see the face of Him who had no beauty that any should desire Him; we see His visage that was so marred more than any man (Isa. 52:13-15).

He waited not, but came leaping upon the mountains of separation from God, crossing over from God to sinful humanity. He came that He might bring down the high mountains of God's wrath, and build a Highway for the redeemed to pass over as they come rejoicing home. He leaped over the mountains of sin and condemnation to bring salvation to us.

Sometimes, as we see the difficulties in our lives and the hard things that seem impossible, we wonder if He can surmount them; for we know that we cannot. But He who could surmount the mountains of God's broken law and wrath, and of man's sin and separation from God's presence, can surmount every mountain and hill that is in your life and mine.

At first, we only look for Him in the joy and blessings; but He comes much oftener and more preciously as He leaps upon the mountains of difficulty. There are things so hard that none could undertake them but the Lord; but He will make these things stepping-places for His feet, and upon them He will reveal Himself to you in a deeper way than He has ever done before.

He will come to you upon the things that are so hard you do not see how you are going to go through them; and you wonder if even the Lord can lift you over them. He will come to you in the hard things in your life, in your disposition, in the testings in your body. He will come to you in the hardest surroundings and circumstances. He will leap over all the mountains of difficulty and skip along the hills of your fears and distress; and if your eyes are anointed, you will see Him revealing Himself through your window.

You cannot see Him unless your eyes are anointed, you cannot hear Him unless your ears are digged out. We are too satisfied with a shallow experience, and we do not apprehend that God always meets us most preciously and manifestly in the hardest place in our lives.

It is upon the mountains of difficulty and over the chasms of despair, which almost crush out our lives and seem immovable and impassable, that the Lord comes to us as He never comes under any other conditions. Sometimes He leaves a hard thing in our lives, which is impossible to us, so that He may meet us there. As we are repeatedly brought up against this hard thing, we must lie down at His feet and seek His help and enabling. Thus does our Beloved build an altar with the stones of difficulty, which only He can move; and it is at this altar, built from the impossible, that we learn to meet Him.

The sheep always shrink close to the shepherd when he is whipping them; and it is through the hardest things in our lives, that the Great Shepherd chastens us; and it is through this chastening, that we are drawn close, close to His side. With most of us, if the path were smooth and easy, we would walk far from our dear Shepherd into forbidden fields. Truly, He comes to us upon the mountains.

How sweetly He comes to us when for any cause He has hidden His face! Though there are many obstacles, which appear to us like mountains, He treads them all down and leaps from one obstacle to another. He crosses precipices and ravines that, to any but Him, would be impassable. He comes skipping upon the hills as does the roe or the hind. All inaccessible heights, all bottomless chasms are nothing to Him; and He draws nearer and nearer until He stands behind our wall.

2:9. **"My Beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold,**

He standeth behind our wall; He looketh in at the windows; He glanceth through the lattice." The first wall behind which Jesus Christ stood, was "The middle wall of partition," which He brake down "that He might create in Himself of the two one new man, so making peace; and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross" (Eph. 2:12-18). It was He who took away the wall that stood between fallen humanity and God. It was He who took away the middle wall of partition that shut out the Gentiles from God and His promises; and in Himself, He made of both Jew and Gentile, one new man, through the peace and reconciliation that were wrought out upon His cross.

He not only came to "the middle wall of partition," but He came to the wall that stood between Him and each individual. He not only came as far as the mountains and the hills, but He came to our very wall, to our window, and to our lattice. The first wall in our lives behind which He stood, was the wall of our sins, which separated us from the Lord who loved us and died for us. He stood so close to us, that we could have touched Him at any time if we had been willing to get the wall of our sins out of the way.

Finally, we got this wall out of the way by humbling our hearts and believing upon His Name, and we were born again and became new creatures in Him. Oh, how we praise God that we do not belong to the sin-stained multitudes that are hurrying on to darkness and eternal death! Oh, how our hearts rejoice that through His blood, the wall of sin and unbelief, which separated us from God, has been torn down.

You notice that it is not *His wall,* but it is *our wall* that hides Him. When anything comes between the Lord and us, it is always *our wall,* for it is always built from our sin, unbelief or incapacity. Even though we are saved, if there is a wall, it is *our wall,* for He never builds walls between

Himself and us. He may hide Himself away in order to quicken our faith, in order to make us want Him rather than His blessings; but when there is a real wall between the Lord and us, it is *our wall* and *we* build it. How often our unbelief raises a wall so that we cannot see Him; though He is near, and we know that He is there, our eyes are holden.

If at any time you cannot get to the Lord, search diligently and see if you have built any walls between you and Him; and if so, hasten to get them out of the way. Do you ask how to get these walls out of the way? By humbling yourself and seeking God. Do you ever have a feeling that God is afar off, that you cannot reach out and bring down answers to prayer, that you cannot touch Him? There is something in your life that has built a wall. Although He hides Himself away from us sometimes, this is not the same, nor is the feeling the same as the separation that comes from a wall which our actions have built. Every child of God who is deep in Him, easily discerns the difference.

When He hides Himself to quicken faith, it appears like a wall, but we know that it is not. But when we build any walls between the Lord and us, He is so good that He will let us see what they are made of. Generally, there is some infidelity, carelessness, or slackness; there is something we have failed to do, or a wrong course we have taken; and it is from this that we have gotten the material to build our wall.

"Standeth behind our wall." He stands there waiting. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." Do you see that the one who is inside must open the door? If we shut the Lord out, we alone can open the door and let Him in; for He never breaks down any doors. He knocks at the door, and if we open it, He will come in and sup with us. He offers

us something precious, and if we listen, He will come and give it to us; but He never forces His presence or His treasures upon us.

"He looketh in at the windows; He glanceth in at the lattice." First, we see the Lord at a distance, then behind the wall, and now in front of the window and glancing through the lattice. The little squares of glass in a lattice window break the vision of all without, so that nothing is clearly discerned.

Sometimes He looks in at our window and glanceth through our lattice, and we do not know that it is the Lord. How many times He would woo us and draw us, but we know Him not. How many years were lost from our lives because we did not know Him when He glanced through our lattice from the pages of His Word, and in conviction. It is wonderful to be in the place where our eyes are anointed and our ears so opened, that we know the Lord whenever He shows Himself.

Are your eyes anointed so that you can see the Lord looking in at your window of afflictions? Are your eyes anointed so that you can see Him glancing through your lattice when He has taken away all your earthly possessions, and left you stripped and desolate? Are your eyes anointed so that you have discerned Him standing behind your wall when He has taken away your loved one, perhaps your only one, and has left your heart torn and bleeding? Do you know why He did this? It was because you had let these things or friends whom you loved become a wall between you and Him. Only as He took away the material would the wall fall down.

If we let the Lord take every wall out of the way, we begin to see Him in greater revelation, until we behold Him in every circumstance and condition in our lives as we never saw Him before. Even when He glances through the lat-

tice, we see Him. We see Him through the lattice of His Word and when we come to His table and partake of the emblems of His broken body and shed blood.

When God sees us in danger of treasuring His gifts rather than Himself, or when He is preparing us for the walk of naked faith, into which very few of His children ever enter, He often withdraws from the open window, and we only see Him as He glances through the lattice. His apparent withdrawal brings great distress, for in such dealings there is nothing between Him and us that has made Him withdraw. As our faith increases, we comfort ourselves with the assurance of God's faithfulness and unchangeableness; and we begin to discern Him as clearly through the lattice as we had before seen Him through the window.

But the Lord finally withdraws behind an apparent wall, which our eyes cannot pierce, though His eyes are ever upon us. Again we are distressed and dismayed, but as faith disperses the clouds of doubt and fear, He gives us "Songs in the night." We are able to say: "I know Him whom I have believed." And the eye of faith is strengthened and purified, until we discern Him behind the wall more clearly than we have ever beheld Him before.

It is when faith has been thus strengthened, that He begins to reveal Himself to our chastened vision; and we catch glimpses of Him through the lattice—passing visions of His beauty which we have never before beheld. If He hides Himself, we press on with our eyes more and more toward Him, and we endure as beholding Him who is invisible. Finally, He reveals Himself in such vision as is beyond all that we can ask or think. So close does He draw and so intimately does He reveal Himself, that faith seems to merge into supernatural sight, as we set the Lord ever before us, and we walk ever before Him.

Let us behold Him through the lattice of His acts, of

His providences, and most of all through the lattice of the Word. Let us behold Him clearer and most blessedly through the lattice of the ordinances, and through the windows of prayer and communion. Truly, now we see in a mirror darkly, but then face to face; now we know in part, but then shall we know fully even as also we are fully known. Even here on earth, we have beheld our Lord in His beauty in only a small degree, as compared with the vision that He is waiting to give to the soul who is willing to pay the price.

O Glorious Bridegroom for whom we long! For whom we wait! Let us ever behold Thee with clearer vision as Thou dost look in through the windows of our hearts and lives. Let us discern Thee as Thou dost glance through the lattice of the trials and afflictions with which Thou dost chasten us. Anoint our eyes that we may behold Thee through the lattice of the precious Word of God. By faith, let us see Thee clearly, wondrously, as we are buried with Thee in baptism; and as we are raised to walk in newness of life through the power of Thy resurrection.

Let us behold Thee intimately as we come to Thy table and partake of the broken loaf and the wine, emblems of Thy broken body and spilt blood. Let us behold Thee by faith, more and more clearly, until Thou shalt be as real and beautiful, as glorious to us while we are in the bodies of our humiliation as Thou wilt be when faith is lost in sight; and we see Thee face to face, and are changed into Thy glorious image as we behold Thee as Thou art!

CHAPTER XIII

THE VOICE OF THE BRIDEGROOM. THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN AT HAND. 2:10-12.

2:10. **"My Beloved spake, and said unto me, rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away."** In the tenth verse and those following, is the first mention of the "garden," or "vineyard," which always means the Kingdom of Heaven; and which was first preached by John the Baptist, who was the forerunner of the Messiah at His first advent. It is the beginning of spring in the Vineyard of the Lord, and we see that there is no ripe fruit, only flowers which give promise of abundant fruitage. The birds are singing, the green figs are beginning to ripen, and the voice of the turtledove is heard proclaiming that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

The Bridegroom has not only come to the bride, but He is calling her to shake off every touch of slumber, to put away all indolence and procrastination, all vain confidence in her past experiences. Whether she has become slothful or whether He has withdrawn to increase her faith, she has been reclining or resting, for He tells her to rise up. She has not followed Him as she did once, for if she had, there would be no necessity for Him to call her to arise and come away.

At the time Jesus was born on earth, the Jews had fallen into such slumber and inertia, although outwardly they were religious and self-satisfied, that they did not know the Word of God when He was made flesh and came and dwelt among them. When their Messiah came, for whom they had been looking for centuries, they neither knew Him nor received

Him. Because He was born in a manger, and His body, the tent in which He tabernacled when upon earth, was poor and without comeliness; because He did not come in pomp and glory, the Jews knew Him not.

He who came to His own, was the One who had led them through the wilderness, and who had revealed God to them; He had gone before them in the cloud by day and in the pillar of fire by night. It was He who had dwelt in unutterable and unapproachable glory in their Holiest of all; it was He who had defeated their enemies for them, and had spread His pavilion over them, so that all nations were afraid before them. He it was, who came to His own and they knew Him not.

Dear child of God, how many times has He come to you in a different way than you were expecting, and you knew Him not? How many times, in answer to your prayers, He came to you in some humble or mean thing, and you knew Him not. How many times you asked great things of Him, and He commenced to answer your prayers through low, mean channels, He hid behind the wall, He came to you, and you knew Him not.

When we become spiritually lazy or stubborn or willful, when we become indifferent or fall asleep, when we walk along the path of our own will and flesh, we will hear the voice of the Lord saying: "Rise up, My love, and come away." Have you ever come before the Lord, thinking that you were going on with Him, and He convicted you that you had not been true to Him? Has He made you know that you have not been going as fast as He would have you, or as you thought you were going? Has He made you know that you have not been walking in the light that He has given you?

There is no experience so distressing as to have the Lord show us, not only that we are not where we should be or

where we thought we were, but that we are not where we have once been. There is no standing still in this race that we have entered. It is like pulling a load up a hill; if we try to stand still, we immediately begin to slip down toward the bottom; and thus we leave the advance light and place, into which, by His grace, we were entering. When we loosen the girdle of Truth a little, and do not go on as fast as He would have us, His voice is ever calling us to put aside all indolence and come away to meet Him. His voice would stir us to leave all that is hindering, and come out to behold the blossoms and the beauty of the Garden of the Lord.

He does not call the bride to come away with Him, but to come away and meet Him. Leave everything, especially your self-life behind, and come away to that which He has for you. We hardly realize that every time Christ calls us and we refuse Him, whether we say it with our lips or with our actions, we really say: "I choose this person or thing, I choose myself, instead of Christ." If we choose to walk with those who are not walking with the Lord, we really choose them in the place of choosing Him; for we cannot walk with both.

There are times when He offers us something, and in the place of rising up and leaving everything so that we can enter in and possess that which He shows us, we fail to enter in; we choose our own ease and our own wills in the place of His. It is when we first hear His voice, that we must rise up and come away to meet Him. God does not stand still, He is ever moving on; and if we delay, His voice will grow fainter and fainter, so that when we do arise to go to Him, we may not find Him.

Do you know that every drawing you feel in your heart, is the voice of Jesus calling you to "rise up and come away"? every moving and yearning in your heart, is the voice of your Beloved urging you to hasten? There are many who

have heard the Lord's voice calling them to arise, and they have arisen a little; but they have not "come away" to meet Him, and have fallen down again in slumber. It is easier to settle down and rest upon the experiences we have had, than to run harder that we may enter into a higher experience. When we hear His voice, let us drop everything and everybody, no matter what becomes of them or of the relation that has been between us; and let us hasten to the place where the Lord can meet us. Then He will show us the blossoms and flowers in the Kingdom of the Lord; He will let us see the promise of fruit and harvest; He will let us hear the singing of the birds.

2:11, 12. **"For, lo, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land."** Historically, the beginning of this book refers to the period just before and at the time of the first advent of Christ. The Bridegroom spoke through John the Baptist, who was His messenger and came to prepare the way before Him. John proclaimed the coming of the Messiah and preached the baptism of repentance.

It sets forth the doing away of the old dispensation and law of the covenant, which had no power to bring life to dead souls and is symbolized by Winter; and the ushering in of the new dispensation of grace, which is symbolized by Spring. The law of God has never been fulfilled excepting in Jesus Christ. That which man could not do, Christ came and did when He died upon Calvary. The darkness and winter of God's wrath and of the condemnation which rested upon man, were done away by the Lord Jesus Christ, who satisfied every demand of the law. The rain from the doing away of the law and of the wrath of God softened the ground and prepared it for the bringing in of a better covenant.

The law was our schoolmaster to bring us to God. As

condemned sinners, we could come to Him only through the grace and mercy that were brought to us through our Lord Jesus Christ. The fierceness of God's wrath struck our Lord as He hung upon Calvary, and as He died, we died in Him there. Now the warmth and sunshine of God's grace, which is in Christ in all fullness, and through Him alone is brought to us, is flowing out to humanity like waves of the ocean. Whosoever will, may plunge into the Fountain and prove that the grace of God is sufficient.

As we think of the faint light that the people of God had under the old dispensation, we see that it truly was winter. It was like the warmth of the sun in midwinter, when its rays can scarcely penetrate and disperse the frost in the air. There was no more power in the law to give life to one soul, than there is power and warmth in the midwinter sun and atmosphere, to bring out the flowers of spring and the fruits of summer and autumn.

There was no life nor power in the law; all was dead and could only prepare the way for Him who could give life. All the law could do, was to show man his utter helplessness, his undone condition, and his exceeding sinfulness. Even when he would do good, there was no power in man's fallen, sinful nature to obey God's commands; He could not work out his own salvation until God had put something in him to work out. Not through works of the law, nor of himself, is man saved; but it is a gift of God. He has *given* unto us eternal life, and the life is in His Son. He that hath the Son, hath the life; and he that hath not the Son hath not the life.

In the individual, this is a picture of the soul who is dead in unbelief; full of deadness and darkness, full of fruitlessness; whose life is bleak, cold, dead, like midwinter. When the breaking up comes, and the rays of the sun begin to fall upon the winter of death and unbelief, the rains and mists

of doubts and fears begin to roll away; and the warmth of the "Sun of righteousness" brings life and warmth to the soul.

It is the rain that comes when winter begins to break up that prepares the ground for the seed and fruitfulness. It is the breaking up, in the consciousness of the condemnation of God, and in the godly sorrow that comes to the repentant sinner, that prepares the heart for the seed and fruit-bearing. The rain cannot bring forth fruit any more than can the snow and winter; but it prepares the ground for the seed, which has life in it, and has life more abundant; and conviction and repentance do not save a man, but prepare him to receive Jesus Christ.

2:12. **"The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land."** "The flowers," which are a token of the Winter of divine anger passed, and of the Spring of divine grace extended, have appeared on the earth in the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the only perfect flower, He is the only perfect fruit, He is the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valleys. Because He is all this, those who are redeemed by Him are the eternal lilies, which are being prepared and cultivated in God's Garden. He is the only true Vine; and as His life flows through the branches that have been grafted into Him, they begin to send forth buds and blossoms.

It not only means this, but the flowers have appeared upon the trees and upon the vines of the heritage of the Lord. As yet there is no fruit, but the flowers give promise of a rich harvest from every shrub and plant, from every vine that the Father has planted in His vineyard. This is the beginning of the setting up of the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth.

Everything is either in blossom or in flower; upon the

olive tree and upon the vine appear the bud, the blossom, the green fruit. Though the fruit has not yet ripened, the fragrance and beauty of the first days of spring cover the Lord's vineyard; the sunshine of God's approval is over His heritage. The warmth of His grace is wooing the buds to burst forth into flowers, the flowers to give place to the tiny fruit, and the immature fruit to go on unto perfection.

"The time of the singing of birds is come," is historically a figure of the rejoicing that went forth over the first advent of the Messiah. It was His Coming that heralded the springing into life of that which was dead through the fall of man. None can tell the joy, which, at His first advent, filled the hearts of those Jews who received Jesus Christ as their Messiah, and as the "Hope of Israel."

This is also symbolic of the music that should fill the heart of every believer, for truly has the Lord put a new song in our mouths, even praise unto our God; and the mouth of every one who has been redeemed, should be filled with praises. It is emblematic of the song of the Lamb, which begins as soon as a soul passes out of death into life; of the joy of Jehovah, which is our strength; of counting it all joy when we fall into manifold temptations; of rejoicing in our infirmities and weaknesses, that the strength of our Lord may be manifested. It is continually singing and making melody in our hearts unto God; it is rejoicing in the Lord always and having His praise continually in our mouths.

This clause is also translated: "The time of the pruning of the vines is come." This is likewise the time of pruning of the vines so that the Master, when He comes, shall find fruit and not leaves only. As His hand prunes and cuts away that which will hinder us and keep us from getting His best, our hearts must give forth music and singing. We must praise Him with love and abandonment because He takes such care of us. The husbandman never prunes

a dead branch. In Heb. 12:8, we are told that if we are without chastening, we are not sons, but bastards. The dead branches are burned, but where a little fruit has appeared, the vine is pruned that the branches may bear more fruit. For herein is our Father glorified, that we bear *much* fruit.

"The voice of the turtledove is heard in our land." Among the Jewish expositors, this is applied to the voice of Elias; by most other expositors, it is applied to the voice of John the Baptist, the forerunner. When we remember that John came in the spirit of Elias, we see how wonderfully these expositions harmonize. The turtledove is an emblem of peace, and we know that John the Baptist came as a forerunner of the One who is our Peace, even the Heavenly Solomon, the Prince of Peace.

The turtledove is an emblem of love, and especially of the Holy Spirit, and he is the first of the migratory birds to return in the springtime; the first to come back to the warmth and to the brightness of the returning sun. John the Baptist was the first to proclaim the approach of the Spring of grace, the Summer of God's presence, the dispensation of the grace of God, which our Lord ushered in at His first advent. In Jeremiah, God uses the turtledove to reprove His people, because the dove knows the time of his coming, but God's people know not the law of Jehovah. The dove is a still greater reproach to the Jews, because they knew not their Messiah when He came.

The turtledove is also the emblem of repentance and of the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb, and came preaching repentance. Truly did the sound of the turtledove go forth in the land at the time our Lord was upon the earth. And this sound is going forth over the earth in these days.

The Second Coming of the Lord is drawing near, and

over the whole earth is heard the voice of the Holy Spirit, proclaiming the near Coming of the Lord. It was the Holy Spirit who proclaimed the first advent of Christ through John, and who called men to repentance because the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand.

In these last days, and with mighty power during the last decade, the same Holy Spirit that called men to repentance through John, and prepared the way for the first coming of the Lord, is proclaiming the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ. The voice of the Holy Dove is heard in the land. Now, it is not only through one, (as is was then through John alone,) but the Holy Spirit is speaking through thousands of God's children, proclaiming the near Coming of Christ, and calling upon Christians everywhere to prepare to meet Him. The sound has gone forth over the whole earth that "Jesus is coming soon."

Those who know the signs of the times, as set forth in the Word of Prophecy, are astir as they recognize that the midnight cry is indeed going forth. "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh, go ye forth and meet Him!" Most of the Jews were asleep at the time of Christ's first coming, and most of God's people are sleeping in these days. Very few believe from their hearts that the Coming of the Lord draweth near; but the Holy Dove, who knows the time of His return, of His Coming, is heard in the land; and He is warning us, calling us to arouse from slumber, urging every child of God to prepare for that Great Day.

Never since the time of the early Church, has there been such singing of birds, such pruning of branches, such separating, as God has been doing in His vineyard during these last ten years. There is a different note of praise, which has never been heard in the same way before; and this is the sounding forth of praise to Jesus in the phrase, "Glory to Jesus!" It seems to well up in the hearts of thousands of

God's children over the face of the earth. It is as though our precious Lord has been robbed of glory so long, that the Holy Spirit would literally bring back to Him the glory which, during many centuries, has largely been turned aside to man.

Not only do we hear this note of praise, but there has been wonderful music, which has gone forth in the power of the Holy Spirit; music that is an echo from the heavenly choir. As the virgins of the bride go on unto perfection, it is not when everything is going smoothly, that this singing is going to be heard with the most sweetness and power. God is going to bring us to the place where we shall sing with the most abandonment and melody when the pruning of the vines is going on.

When God reaches down His hand and begins to cut the suckers from the vines, when He begins to separate us and to deal with us, then shall be heard the singing of birds over the whole domain of our beings. We shall not go about, moaning and repining if we have really set our faces to go through with Jesus.

Our precious Lord wants us to have "Songs in the night" of sorrow and trial, of affliction and persecution. In the night of His dealing and purifying processes, He wants us to have songs that will ring out upon the air and in the ears of all who are near us; that will float upward until they resound through the courts of Heaven, and mingle with the music of the heavenly hosts around the throne of God.

After the husbandman has gone through the vineyards and pruned the vines, they look like fields of unsightly sticks stuck in the ground. No one would believe that they could ever bear a leaf, much less any fruit, so unpromising do they appear. But when the rain and sun minister to them, abundant fruit and harvest is brought forth in its time. So is it with us. We are not nearly stripped yet, but He would

have us sing all the time He is working upon us, so that it will be a real time of joy to our souls and to every one around us.

He would have us anoint our heads and praise Him when we are going through hard things, so that it would be a veritable singing of birds. How often when we are in this pruning process, we put on sackcloth and ashes and say with every action, if not in words: "The Lord is dealing with me, I am going through very hard things." Let us rejoice and send forth melody from our lips, let us make melody in our hearts unto our Lord. Though we pass through continual Valleys of Weeping, let us make of them Places of Springs, until every spot is covered with the blessings of the early rain.

CHAPTER XIV

THE CLEFTS OF THE ROCK. 2:13, 14.

2:13. **"The fig tree ripeneth her green figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth their fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away."** For the fig tree, upon which abundant fruitage has been preparing during the winter, has begun to "make red" her green figs. We read in Matthew 24:32 ff: "From the fig tree learn her parable: when her branch is now become tender, and putteth forth its leaves, ye know that the summer is nigh; even so ye also, when ye see all these things, know ye that He is nigh, even at the doors." Already do we see these signs upon the earth. However thick may be the darkness, however hard are the testings and afflictions we are in, let us lift up our heads because our redemption draweth nigh. The Coming of the Lord is so near, we know not at what moment we shall hear the shout of our Lord, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God, and be caught up out of all darkness and testings to meet the Lord in the air, and thus be forever with Him.

"The vines," symbolic of the true Vine, are ladened with fragrant blossoms. This symbolizes the birth and pure, fragrant life of our dear Lord when He was upon earth. The flowers on the vine have their place, and Christ's holy, spotless life had its place; but if there were only blossoms on the grapevine, with no fruit, the blossoms, however fragrant and beautiful they might be, would profit nothing. Even so with the true Vine. If the pure, fragrant life of our Lord upon earth were all, then there would be no fruit; and His

life would have profited nothing in the redemption of the human race.

But our Lord's life on earth was perfected, the fruit was perfected and was gathered, and the juice of the fruit flowed out when He hung upon Calvary. It was only as He died, that He led many souls to Glory. It was only as He died, that fruit appeared upon the true Vine. Those who do not accept the Atonement and the Blood of Jesus Christ, or pervert their real meaning, really exalt the flowers of His perfect human life above the eternal fruit, which comes forth and is perfected through His death alone.

There must be the blossoms and the flowers before the fruit appears; and without the pure, spotless human life of our Lord, there could have been no death, hence no efficacy of His work upon Calvary. But we must remember that we are saved through His death, and not through the life He lived on earth. It is only through our union with Him in His death and resurrection, that we die and are raised up to walk in newness of life. There is such preciousness and power in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, that our hearts rejoice as our faith lays hold of the power in His work, and it becomes operative in our lives.

As with our Lord who is the true Vine, so with the believers who are the branches; the blossoms, however beautiful and fragrant, profit nothing if they wither away and fall off, and there is no fruit. We are warned that those that have no fruit shall be taken away; but the great Husbandman prunes those that show signs of life, and have even a little fruitfulness. He purges and cuts off all suckers and fruitless wood that they may bear *more* fruit; and if they abide in the Vine, Christ, they shall bear *much* fruit.

Already the Kingdom of Heaven is beginning to show promise of a great and eternal harvest. Already the warmth and light from the "Sun of righteousness," who has arisen

with healing in His wings, has moved upon that which was dead and dormant; and in the place of dry, dead branches, tender shoots are springing forth. Out of the dry ground has a "Root-sprout come forth" (Isa. 53:2). Out of the stock of Jesse, a Shoot has come forth, and a Branch out of his roots which shall bear fruit (Isa. 11:1). This fruitful Branch is Jesus the Christ, who is leading many sons to Glory. The fragrance that fills the air from the blossoms upon the vine, is the sweet savor before God of the "beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." This sweet savor also ascends from every branch that abides in Christ, and from those heavenly blossoms, which shall become fruit for Eternity unto the glory of God.

Again the Bridegroom calls her to arise that she may run more patiently the race that is set before her, and follow more closely her Lord who goes before. Again His voice warns her that she must shake off all indolence and hesitation, all "taking of a little rest;" for the Garden of the Lord is in blossom, and the trees already give promise of putting forth fruit; the time of harvest is approaching. He would not have her come empty-handed before the Lord of the harvest; He would not have her sleeping while the vineyard of her life is neglected and untended. All is ready, all is prepared; there is no time to lose if she would keep close by His side and be ready when the fruit and vintage are gathered.

Only a little while remains before our Lord will come again, and there is no time to lose if we would be ready to go out and meet Him. Suddenly shall He come for His own, and there will be many who are not watching; many who have not put on the wedding garment; many will not know He has come until they miss the familiar faces of those who have been caught away to meet Him.

Even with those who have set their hearts to be ready

for the Coming of Jesus, untiring watchfulness alone will keep them from being lulled into a false tranquillity, a deceptive confidence, which subtly steals over the soul before it is recognized. If we are in close touch with our precious Lord and have our hearts attuned to His faintest whisper, over and over shall we hear His voice calling us: "Arise, My love, and come away."

He does not let us easily lie down and slumber. Neither can we be overcome with deadly, spiritual lethargy and sleep, without again and again hearing His voice calling us to arise and come away. With patience and longsuffering, He seeks to protect us from every touch of slumber and indifference. With tender voice, He speaks to our hearts when they would be over-charged with surfeiting and the cares of this life; and we hear Him say: "Arise, My love, My fair one, and come away! Shake off all lethargy and indolence; gird thy loins more securely with the girdle of Truth, which is the Faith once for all delivered unto the saints. Look carefully that there is not one thread of error in this girdle which I have given thee, lest in the hottest and hardest place in the race, thy girdle break; and by stumbling thou lose the prize.

"Arise, My love! Gird up thy garments more firmly about thy loins that thou mayest run more swiftly. The goal is in sight, and thou hast run well. Arise! Arise! My love, My fair one, and come away!" Our hearts cry out, "Where, Lord?" Then comes the answer. "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." "He that doth not take his cross and follow after Me, is not worthy of Me."

2:14. **"O My dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the covert** (or "secret places") **of the stairs"** (or the "inaccessible places"). How tenderly He reminds us of what our hiding-place meant to Him, and at what untold cost it

was provided for us in the clefts of the Rock of Ages. What suffering and ignominy were His, as, through the veil, that is to say His flesh, He opened to us a new and living way into the Holiest of all; into those eternal abiding-places in the clefts of the Rock. When He cried: "It is finished!" was the Rock rent; then were those hiding-places opened up, in which we are invited to hide away from the enemy.

It is in this Rock that was cleft at Calvary, that the bride is hidden away "from the plottings of man." It is in this hiding-place, that she is kept secretly "from the strife of tongues." No enemy can reach her in this precious retreat; neither can any enemy get her out of it if by faith she abides in Christ. Is the enemy tormenting you with fears and forebodings? Hide away in the clefts of the Rock. Is there something that is disturbing and distressing you, do you feel that you must say or do something in order to make it right and prevent harm and reproach? Hide away in Jesus; commit your way unto Him and He will bring it to pass. Are you misunderstood and unjustly accused or maligned? Find a cleft in the Rock, Christ, and hide away; for this Rock was cleft for you and me that our lives might be hid with Christ in God.

People who see us do not know that we are hiding away in the clefts of the Rock. They see only a heavenly, supernatural calm, which abides through every storm and hurricane; but God knows we are hiding away in the Rock; and the devil knows whence comes this victorious quiet. If we abide in Christ, we are as much hidden away as God can hide us. Those about us see our bodies walking around on earth; but they do not know that we, who live in these frail tents, are hidden away so that neither man nor devil can find nor touch us.

We must believe that we are in the Rock because God has told us that He has put us there. If we take this place

and there abide, at every step we shall prove that Jehovah is a wall of fire round about us and that He is the glory within. It is here, that the bride finds security from every foe and from every storm. Though the storm is fierce, it cannot dismay her. Though the wind blows and the hurricane sweeps down upon her hiding-place, they cannot come near her. Though the enemy sends out all his power against her, Jesus is between her and the enemy, He has given her power over all the power of the enemy, and no power of his can overcome her because she is hidden away in the Rock. Her Beloved keeps her in perfect peace because her mind is stayed on Him, and she has taken refuge in Him.

In this hiding-place, the bride does not fear though a host encamps against her; though war and conflict, though battles and persecution arise against her, her heart is confident. Though the earth do change, no fear comes nigh her. The mountains may be shaken into the heart of the seas, "howbeit the firm foundation of God standeth, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are His." Though the waters of the sea roar and are troubled, her heart is fixed trusting in her God; though the mountains tremble with the swelling thereof, she has set the Lord always before her; because He is at her right hand, she shall not be moved.

The bride of the Lamb, hidden and protected, journeys upward, walking in Christ as she received Him. He is the retreat and path that no enemy can approach, and no bird of prey knoweth, nor can the vulture's eye see it; over this path, the proud beasts cannot go, neither can the fierce lion pass by it nor lurk in those precious clefts. Here is found the hidden stair, which was built in the clefts of the Rock; the stair that reaches from earth to Heaven, from sinful humanity to God through the finished work of Jesus Christ upon Calvary. Over this stair, the bride travels upward to the land of Eternal Day.

It is here, she finds security from every foe; it is here, she finds sweet and uninterrupted communion with her Beloved. None but the redeemed shall ever see this stairway, none but the redeemed shall ever walk upon it. It is this stair that leads to the throne of God; and all who are upon it, if they endure to the end, not stopping nor turning aside on the way, shall reach this goal and sit down with Christ upon His throne. This stair is the same as the wonderful ladder that Jacob saw; it was set up on earth when Christ came down and died upon the cross, and it reached to Heaven when He was raised from the dead and ascended to His Father. Not only is this stair inaccessible to the enemy; but only by endurance, and through the grace of God can the bride climb up, into all that God has provided for her.

It is not an easy way, this stair that our Lord set up on earth, whose top reaches into Glory. But all hardness and suffering are forgotten if we retreat deeper and deeper into Him, if we hide away in Him. As we look up that shining, living way, and begin to see faintly that which has been provided for us, we cling to the Rock in abandonment, in closer fellowship and communion. As our eyes look upward and are ever fixed upon the recompense of the reward, unseen arms bear us over the hardest places and plant our feet upon the next higher step, which to us appeared so inaccessible. We feel the everlasting arms carrying us upward, upward, while we can only cling to the Rock, hide away in His pierced side, love and adore Him for the "Exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think."

Not only are we protected, but there are rivers of water flowing out of the Rock, and the Rock follows us. All through our journeyings in the wilderness here below, the Rock, Christ Jesus, follows us and we drink abundantly of living waters. In Him is all we need, and if by faith, we take that place and abide there, we shall have everything that

God has for us, and we can have it in no other way. It is not easy to go up that shining way, but it is blessed. It is not an easy path, but it is wonderful; and it becomes more wonderful as we more fully understand that we are upon the stairway, which will bring us from earth to Heaven, from weakness and humiliation to strength and glorification.

O precious clefts, O wondrous secret stair, which can only be found when new vision is given at the new birth! O blessed hiding-place where no one but God is with us, and no eye but His beholds us if we perfectly abide there! O smitten Rock, of which we drink, and which continually follows us through our wilderness wanderings! What strength and power, what refreshing and holy swiftness are to those who ever abide in the clefts of the Rock, and hasten upward upon that hidden stair, which their Beloved has set up for them through the shedding of His own blood.

"Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice and thy countenance is comely" (or "beautiful"). The Lord would have the bride's face ever turned Heavenward, her eyes looking "right on and her eyelids straight before her." He would have her "turn neither to the right hand nor to the left," for her face is beautiful only when it is turned toward Him. He whispers in her heart: "If any man putteth his hand to the plow and looketh back, he is not worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven." He entreats her that He may see her countenance, for it is only when the bride's face is turned toward her Lord, that He ever beholds it. If her face is turned toward Him, she shall never walk in darkness, but she shall walk in the light as He is in the light; she shall never stumble, for she will walk in Him who is the light.

It is when we are in the hardest, steepest places, when it seems that our very life will go out, and we are tempted to sit down and bemoan ourselves, that God draws us closer

to our Beloved. Many times, the next higher step is so far up and appears so inaccessible, that we are almost in despair; but if we faint not, and if our faith does not fail, God will lift us up and prove that all things are possible to Him, though with us they are impossible. It is in these hard places, that the Bridegroom would have the bride's face turned Heavenward so that He may always behold it; and it is in the hardest places, that she goes on faster than when she is without testings and is walking about in a large place.

If our faces were turned Heavenward more persistently when we are climbing the steepest stair, they would be more beautiful to Him who is watching us and holding us fast. Not only does He rejoice in our beauty, as we look away from all else to Him, and refuse to look at the difficulties; but as we, with unveiled faces, behold as in a mirror His glory, we are transfigured into the same image from glory to glory.

The Bridegroom knows the need there is for the bride to be changed into His image, if she would attain unto the high calling wherewith she has been called. He alone knows the work that must be done before she is like Him, and ready to go in to the marriage supper of the Lamb. He knows that it is only by beholding His beauty and glory, that she is changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. He calls her to set her face steadfastly toward Him, to run with patience the race set before her, looking away to Jesus who alone is the Author and Finisher of her faith. As she steadfastly obeys, she hears His voice speaking to her. "Thy countenance is beautiful, thou art all fair, My love; there is no spot in thee."

Not only would He see her countenance ever turned Heavenward, not only would He behold it forever unveiled before Him, but He would hear her voice in communion, in prayer, in worship and in praise. He would have all her words for Himself and to His glory. He would not have her speak unworthy, trifling words; He is grieved when she

speaks unkind, untrue, gossiping words; words tainted with insincerity and guile, bitterness, envy and jealousy. We can hardly understand how the voice of the bride can be sweet to Jesus Christ, but though His voice is sweet to us, a thousandfold sweeter is the bride's voice to Him.

He would hear her voice pouring out her love in continual communion; He would hear her praise Him and have her voice going out in thanksgiving and rejoicing in Him and in what He has done for her. It is when her voice is kept for Him alone, when it is going out to Him in love and worship, in communion and prayer that her steps become more firm and she goes on with increasing speed. If her voice is continually directed to Him, all the unworthy words which she would speak to others, will be cut off; and the words of her mouth and the meditations (or "soft utterances") of her heart will be acceptable in the sight of Him, who is her Rock and her Redeemer.

As she abides in this place of sweet converse, as she talks with Him face to face, she hears His voice saying: "Sweet is thy voice." How precious are these hiding-places in the clefts of the Rock. How little have we entered in and hidden away from the strife of tongues and from the birds of prey. How little have we apprehended and treasured this place of security, to which He has brought us.

Are we traveling swiftly, steadily upward? Are we sinking deeper and deeper into this secret place of His presence? Are our faces ever turned toward Him, that the reflection of His light and beauty may shine upon us, and thus we be changed into the same image from glory to glory? Is our voice kept for His use and glory alone? Is it only used in testimony and prayer, in communion and adoration toward Him? Then shall we hear Him say: "O My dove, that art in the clefts of the Rock, in the secret places of the stair, let Me see thy countenance, let Me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is beautiful."

CHAPTER XV

CARE OF THE VINEYARD. THE LOVE AND DEVOTION OF THE BRIDE. 2:15-17.

2:15. **"Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vineyards are in blossom."** The Bridegroom warns the bride that it is not enough to sit in the garden and admire the beauty of the flowers and smell their fragrance. It is not enough to listen to the singing of the birds and look forward to the harvest. It is not enough to rejoice that she has been made meet to become partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light, that she has been delivered out of the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of the Son of God's love. She must be up and doing; she must keep the vineyard of her own life and soul. She must take every fox, especially the young foxes that hide away and eat the vines, stripping them of the bark and destroying them.

The word, "take," means "to seize and hold fast; to catch;" and the adjective, "little," has a most significant meaning, which contains a solemn warning and revelation concerning the cause of much of the fruitlessness in our lives. It not only means small because they are young and weak, but it means the very smallest and least important; those that we look upon as hardly worthy of notice because we consider that they are too insignificant to cause any harm or trouble. Let us notice that nothing is said of the large foxes. We are solemnly warned to hunt out and take those little foxes which we have been overlooking, and which we have allowed to remain unmolested among our vines.

At pruning time, if the dead twigs or branches, the rub-

bish that is cut from the vines, are left upon the ground, the old fox will hide away her young at the roots of the vine, and the little foxes will eat the tender shoots and the bark until the vine is girdled and spoiled; and a vine or tree that is girdled, loses its sap and dies. The old foxes eat the grapes, and the young foxes spoil the vines; but they also become full-grown and multiply.

It is not the great things in our lives that cause us to fail God the most. When we are faced with something formidable, we know that it must be overcome; and we draw upon the grace and the power, which are in the Lord, to do this. It is the little things that we do not think amount to anything which are going to stop us going through with Jesus. It may be along the lines of habits, words, or our old natural ways, which have been with us for years; and which are so a part of ourselves that we are hardly conscious they are there.

It is these neglected things that have eaten into, and around our lives until the spiritual life has ebbed away; and we are left weak, dry, barren. It is the little things that will keep us from going up when Jesus comes; the things that are not noticed, and which hide away in the rubbish that has been left under the vines. All that has fallen and withered away, all the flesh and the unfruitful, must not only be cut off, but must be carried outside the vineyard. We must keep ourselves "far from a false matter" (Ex. 23:6), and also far from all that is barren and unworthy.

God warns us to catch every fox. We must not leave the old ones alive to eat the fruit, which the Holy Spirit is working in our lives; but above all, we must catch the smallest foxes lest they destroy the vines themselves. We are to lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us. The characteristics of the "fox," reveal that it is not so easy to be faithful in this, as might appear. No

animal is more deceitful and cute, more treacherous and sly, than the fox. And nothing in our lives is more deceiving and treacherous than those little habits, words, weaknesses, which appear as nothing in themselves; but it is they that are literally sapping away our spiritual life and strength. We cannot pity one of these little foxes, no matter how harmless or even attractive it may appear. It always happens, that as soon as we get any little fox out of our vineyard, God lets us see the havoc it has wrought; and it no longer appears small and unimportant to us.

Although the foxes are hidden away in the vineyard during the winter, it is not when everything is frozen up, that they work. It is when spring comes with its gracious showers and warm sunshine, when the vines begin to send forth tender sprouts, that the foxes come out of their hiding-places. Thus it is in the Vineyard of the Lord. When God begins to work, whether in a community, in a company, or in an individual, many little foxes appear, running to and fro, and hiding here and there. Unless they are caught and destroyed, they will undo all of God's gracious working, and will spoil the vines.

Errors in doctrine and lack of firmness in standing for the Truth as it is in Jesus, are among the first foxes that appear in the vineyard when the sun grows warmer, and the blossoms begin to come out. How many times God's children do not indorse error, but they compromise and ignore it; they affiliate with those who have embraced error, and before they realize it, their own vines are nearly destroyed by their lax attitude toward the Truth of God.

Indifference concerning a close walk with God; compromising with those who are not walking in the strait and narrow path, and who are not standing for the Truth of the Gospel, will lay waste a vineyard that is in blossom; destroying not only the fruit, but the vines themselves. Wasted time and foolish talking, lack of diligence, neglect of prayer

and of the Word, will strip the bark from the vines; so that the sap, in which is the life, will run out; and the vines will die.

We must watch every root and branch, and take every little fox hidden away among them. Many lives have shown blossoms of promise. The sun has risen, the warmth has caused the leaves to come forth, and the flowers have appeared with their fragrance and beauty. But the owner of the vineyard did not keep it. He was neglectful; he let the fences of God's Word and of obedience fall down, and error came and ate the vines. He did not watch it, and the weeds, the nettles, and thistles, which represent sharp unchristlike words and actions, have overrun the ground; and the little foxes have hidden away among them. The vines are choked and spoiled; the blossoms are withered, and all promise of fruit has faded away. Only leaves and weeds remain.

2:16. **"My Beloved is mine, and I am His; He feedeth His flock among the lilies."** He has warned her that she must put away those things that seem small to her, but which will eat the vines in her vineyard and destroy all promise of fruit. The word "spoil" has the meaning of "strangle." While this thought is not applicable to the damage the foxes do in a grape vineyard; it is a vivid expression of the way in which the little sins and neglect strangle the vines in our lives, preventing the power of the life of Jesus from flowing to the highest branch and to the tiniest twig; preventing His life from being manifested to the glory of God; preventing the fruit from maturing.

Although the bride has not seen the Bridegroom, He has spoken to her in love and assurance, in gentle warning and encouragement. She is assured of her union with Him, which is eternal and indissoluble. Her heart is filled with rest because He is hers; she is apprehending that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor

things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate her from the One who died for her, and from His love.

In deep settled peace, she rests in the assurance that, though she is unworthy and many times unfaithful, He abideth faithful for He cannot deny Himself. As she recalls all He has done for her, she comforts and strengthens herself in Him and in His undying love. She rejoices that, whether together or separated, whether seen or unseen, her Beloved is hers and she is His. Literally: "My Beloved is for me and I am for Him."

There is nothing so precious as to apprehend that our Beloved is ours and we are His. There is such joy and sense of holy possession in the thought that our Beloved is ours. Although the redeemed are: "A great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation and of all tribes and peoples and tongues," Christ belongs to every redeemed soul. Although there are many members in His body, and many virgins in the bride, He belongs as wholly to each virgin as though only she had been redeemed. His love and care for each of us is as perfect and undivided as though there were not thousands of others calling upon His Name, and drawing upon His care and love. His sweetness is not lessened.

Oh, wondrous thought, that, as far as our relation to Him, and His love and care to us are concerned, our Lord is ours as fully, as preciously, as though He loved and died for each one of us alone! There can be no jealousy among the virgins of the bride, for every virgin of the Blood-washed throng is essential to complete the one bride.

He is ours to love and worship, to adore and obey; He is ours that we may let Him fill our lives and hearts, that we may draw upon His strength at every step. His beauty and attributes are for us that we may put them on. He is

our High Priest and Sacrifice; He is all we need for He is our precious Storehouse, and in Him are hidden all God's riches in glory.

Do we need wisdom and knowledge? All the riches of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Him, and He is ours! Do we need peace? He is our peace, and He is ours. He is our righteousness and sanctification, He is our refuge and strong tower, He is ours! When we are left alone, and those who have been near and dear to us are taken away, let us rejoice that He is ours. When we are left desolate through bereavement or affliction, let us remember that "He is ours." and that in Him we find all we need.

The bride rejoices not only that her Beloved is hers, but that she is His. She is His because He created her, because He has redeemed her, because He has loved her with an everlasting love. She is His love slave, by free and joyful choice. She is His to protect and defend. No harm can befall her, no evil can come nigh her when His banner, "Love," is over her, and marks her out as His own possession. She is His that He may fight her battles; she is His to correct and chasten, to mold and shape; she is His that He may perfect that which concerneth her and make her more than conqueror. She is His to feed and nourish; and He alone can bring her home to Glory, and seat her upon His throne as His spotless spouse. She is for Him alone.

Let us lay our wills down at His feet, that His will may more closely encompass us. Let us yield that He may purify and fashion us into His own glorious image. Only as we abandon ourselves to Him without reserve, can we enter into the relation that is here described; and go on to all that is set forth in the rest of this revelation of Christ and His bride. Every power and every faculty—all, all must be His and for Him alone; for Him to use as He pleases.

The half-hearted Christian never knows the joy of the abandonment that is ours when we say: "I am for my Beloved." Our only sorrow is that there is so little to pour out at His feet. Our only regret is that all we can bring is so mean and contemptible, compared to that which He is to us, and which is expressed in the preceding clause: "My Beloved is mine."

Not alone is the bride His to nourish and love, but God laid upon His Son Jesus Christ all the stains and sins that were upon her. She has been "redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver and gold . . . but with the precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the Blood of Christ." He has provided her a shining robe, even His own righteousness; He has brought her peace, He has given her access to the Holy of holies and to the Mercy seat, Christ; for He is her Mercy seat.

Beloved reader, have we realized that we are "for Him"? Are we keeping our robes spotless, are we walking as pure virgins who belong to a spotless, Heavenly Bridegroom? We are His that He may love us and make us worthy to sit with Him upon His throne, we are His by free and joyful consent. To our amazement and joy, He has bespoken us for Himself; and we have given ourselves to be His through time and Eternity, to be His and His alone.

Time is rapidly fading away, the things of the earth and of the natural are sinking out of sight and becoming as shadows. There is a glory falling upon our union with our Lord, which is shining more brightly as the days go by. It seems that there are only a few more mileposts to pass, only a little more of the earthy to be taken off, only a little more time in which to perfect our relation to Him and our separation from all else, and then shall we rise to meet Him in the clouds; and thus shall we be forever with the Lord.

"He feedeth among the lilies." The Lord is always

found among His people, and it is the pure in heart that shall see God. The "lilies" are the pure in heart, those who have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb, the virgins who are following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. Among them, He pastures and takes His rest; He is in their midst and leads them. The Bridegroom Himself has said: "As a lily among thorns so is my love among the daughters." The Forty-fifth Psalm, which describes the bride of the Lamb, is entitled "The Lilies." He is not only among the lilies now, but He is coming back and will be among the lilies throughout eternal ages.

2:17. **"Until the day break and the shadows flee away, turn my Beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether."** "Bether" means "separation." The mountains over which our Lord passed at His first coming, were the mountains of separation from God, because of His divine law being broken, and the sentence of condemnation and death resting upon mankind. These mountains of Bether are divided by deep chasms, symbolic of the gulf of separation, which sin has made between fallen humanity and a holy God. Over these mountains and chasms only Christ could pass (see notes on ch. 1:8).

When He brought salvation to the world, He came over the mountains of separation, He spanned the chasms of God's wrath; He was like a roe or a young hart as He overcame all difficulties. He came to His own and His own received Him not. Not only did Israel long for the first advent of the Messiah, but for centuries, the Church of Jesus Christ has been longing for His Second Advent.

It is not across the mountains of separation that Christ will come the second time; but it is from the "Mountain of Spices," which is symbolic of His finished work upon Calvary, that He will come in the clouds for His bride. She

is longing for Him to come down from that Mount of Spices (ch. 8:14); she is loving and looking for His appearing, she is watching for the glorious day of His presence to break, when she will be forever with the Lord.

With deep yearning, she cries: "Until the day break and the shadows flee away." As we have said before, night in this Song always means the absence of the Beloved, and day is always His presence. Sometimes, through a little carelessness or not walking softly before Him, He seems to be separated from her, and she strains her eyes to catch the first glimpse of Him as He returns to her over any separation. Do you know what paves the way for the Lord to return? It is deep humility and repentance. Even as our Lord humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross, so must we humble ourselves and become obedient to the death of the cross. Wherever there is anything lifted up between us and God, there must be real humility before the Lord comes down and spans this separation.

Why have we not had a clearer revelation of our Beloved? Mountains of Separation, many times raised by indifference or unfaithfulness. Why do we not hear His voice oftener and more clearly? Mountains of Separation made by our own thoughts and opinions, by the voice of man. Why do we not get guidance more easily and perfectly? Mountains of Separation built up from the desire to have our own will and go our own way. Why have we not entered into deeper communion and fellowship with Him? Mountains of Separation built out of our love for flesh and the natural, rather than love for Christ and the spiritual.

Truly, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand." Already we begin to see faint signs of the dawn. As the shadows and darkness of the sin and iniquity of this world increase about us, we are homesick for our Father's house;

we are heartsick for the presence of our Beloved. As it is always darkest just before dawn, so the perilous times in which we are living, proclaim the near Coming of Christ.

Our souls cry out: "Until the day break and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether." It is His inshining into our hearts that has given to us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; and which is preparing us for the full day. It is the outshining of His glorious presence at His Second Coming that shall make every shadow flee away, and will usher in Eternal Day.

"Dear Lord, bring down every mountain and hill that separates us from Thee. Hasten and come down over every obstacle, over all our weakness and shortcomings, over our unbelief and slothfulness. Prepare us for the day of Thy Coming, lest it break, and we are found unclothed, and not ready to go in to the marriage supper. Precious Lord, draw us nearer Thy bleeding side; lift us higher, ever higher into the atmosphere of Thy presence and the revelation of Thyself and Thy love, until faith is lost in sight, and Time merges into Heaven and Eternity. Then shall we praise Thee throughout endless ages that Thou art ours and we are Thine."

CHAPTER XVI

THE BRIDEGROOM SOUGHT AND FOUND. 3:1-5.

3:1. **"By night on my bed I sought Him whom my soul loveth: I sought Him, but I found Him not."** This is a repetition of the cry found in the last verse of chapter two. She has been waiting through the darkness for the first rays of the dawn, which represent the Bridegroom's presence; but the night of His absence is still around her; and the cry that she sent out to Him in ch. 2:17 has not been granted.

Figuratively, this sets forth the hungry soul seeking a nearer approach to the Lord in the assembly (symbolized by "the city"), and by mingling with the saints who come together for mutual edification, and to seek the Lord. She begins to seek Him among those who are following Him. We are commanded not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together; but there are times, when we need more help than we can glean from the fellowship and touch with the saints. We are edified and encouraged by mingling with those who love the Lord, but we need a personal lift and help, which can only come from those whom God has chosen and uses in this way, whether ministers or tenders of the flock.

She has longed that the shadows shall flee away, that the dawn shall break. How our souls go out toward our Beloved, as we see the shadows of the close of this dispensation settling in around us; as the days glide by, and the darkness deepens, we see on every side the signs of the Coming of the Lord. We are truly like strangers in a far country; we are traveling through the world as those who are in it but not of it.

Sometimes, we almost catch the reflection of the light from the Celestial City, and our hearts are often refreshed by echoes of music from the heavenly hosts; but we are not satisfied with these passing glimpses of our home-country. We long for the breaking of the day; we long for our home-coming; we are hungry to enter into our building from God, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. The more we hear His voice, the greater is our longing to see Him face to face, with no veil of time nor of human limitations between.

The love of the bride is burning brightly, she is longing and seeking Him whom her soul loveth; her hunger is manifest, though she has been seeking Him upon her bed. While this is a sign of indolence, it does not indicate indifference for she has been seeking Him earnestly and crying for His presence. It is not, however, when we are indolent and seek our Lord while lying at rest in our beds, that we find Him; it is not when we are too unconcerned to arise and gird up our loins and hasten after Him, that we overtake Him.

If we would find our Beloved in deeper revelation than we have ever known Him before, if we would be watching, waiting, ready, when the Son of Man cometh, we cannot take things easy. We shall not get anything if we only seek Him a little when we have nothing else to do; when we have done everything else and have a few moments leisure. It is those who seek with increasing determination, that receive the "exceeding abundantly above all" they ask or think. It is those that hold on and endure unto the end, it is those that pray through, that see the glory of God. Do you wonder why you have not entered into possession of that which God has shown you? Search diligently and see if, with more or less indolence, you have been seeking Him upon your bed.

There is also a literal interpretation, which applies to this verse. When God is drawing us to a closer walk with Him-

self, there is such hunger in our hearts that even in the night watches, we are seeking our Beloved and crying unto our God. God awakens us in the night seasons and draws our hearts out in longing for our Beloved. The glory of God shines down upon us, and His presence is sweeter, brighter, more blessed in the darkness, than we have ever experienced it in the daytime.

"When I remember thee upon my bed and meditate on thee in the night watches." When all is still around us, when earth and time fade away, our spirits make diligent search; and we draw near to God and eternal things as we commune with our own hearts upon our beds and are still before Him. It is at such moments, alone with God, that He draws very near in communion, dealing, revelation. It is when we cannot take our natural rest because of our love and hunger for Him, that He reveals Himself. And at the darkest hours, He gives us "Songs in the night."

3:2. **"I will arise now, and go about the city, in the streets and in the broad ways, I will seek Him whom my soul loveth."** When she finds that He does not come to her, she shakes off her indolence and determines to go out into the streets and the broad ways and seek Him. She remembers how He once told her to take her way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and to feed her kids by the shepherds' tents. Although the symbolism is different in this place, the meaning is the same. She also remembers that it was through obedience, she found Him when He brought her to sit with Him at His own table.

When we are longing for a greater manifestation of the presence of our Beloved and find that we make no progress in seeking Him alone, He will lead us to those who have gone along the way; those who can guide us into a closer relation to Him and into a clearer revelation of His beauty and grace. None of us live to ourselves; if we had no need

of teaching and instruction through God's chosen instruments, He would not have appointed different offices and ministries for the building up of the body of Christ.

The bride arises to go about the city, and to seek Him whom her soul loveth in the broad ways. Literally, this refers to the city of Jerusalem and the broad places at the gates of the city, where the citizens gathered to transact business. Figuratively, it is the assembly, or the spacious places of blessing and vision. It is not only in the broad ways that she seeks Him, but she seeks Him in the paths or, literally: "Alleys." In every likely and unlikely place does she seek Him.

Many times we find Him in the most unthinkable places, and under the most unpropitious circumstances. In places and ways where we least expected to find the Lord, He will meet us face to face. There are times when we are faced with a mountain in circumstances, testings in our bodies or along other lines, which appears unsurmountable and immovable, though we get to the Lord for everything else. This is often the very place where we find Him waiting for us. All the mountains in our lives are raised up through our lack or unbelief, but there are no mountains of difficulty with God. Everything is an even, flat plain to Him.

Many times we are looking along the avenue or boulevard (which "broad way" could signify; as it means, "avenue or spacious place") for our Lord, but we forget to look in the hidden paths, the narrow lane, the despised alley. The bride has determined to seek her Beloved not only upon the broad ways, but to leave no path nor alley unexplored in her search after Him. Not only in the desirable and lofty places, where many have testified to finding Him, but in the undesirable places will she search.

Our Lord meets us the most often and preciously in the things that humble us, and which we shrink from going

through. He brings us down step by step, until we care not what the testing or humiliation, what the suffering or trial may be through which we must pass, if we only find Him there in greater revelation. Truly, the wide places, the avenues, the mounts of transfiguration, are much more desirable and lovely. We would rather meet our Lord there, and many times He does meet us in these wide, lofty places. But with what glory and preciousness did He meet us in the alleys and byways, into which we were constrained to go and meet Him as the darkness of night enshrouded us; in the places where nobody could go with us, and which no one could understand!

How dark and despised have been the paths and alleys through which my precious Lord has led me that I might find and know Him more fully. How I praise Him for every one, though nobody but the Lord knew what I was passing through. As I entered them, all was dark, and I seemed to be walking and groping about alone; but it was only a short time before I discerned the light of His presence at my right hand, and I was not moved. I set Him ever before me, and I saw Him leading on. "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee." If I had not gone through these despised places, I could not have known Him and had the vision of Him which I have today.

The Lord will not let us set our minds upon any certain way or place in which He must meet us. If we only look for Him in the broad ways, He will meet us more often in the despised places. If we look for Him only in the bypaths and lanes, He will constrain us to go to the broad way or up into the mount of transfiguration, and there do we find Him waiting for us.

3:3, 4. **"The watchmen that go about the city found me; to whom I said, saw ye Him whom my soul loveth?**

It was but a little that I passed from them, when I found Him whom my soul loveth: I held Him, and would not let Him go, until I had brought Him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me." The "watchmen" and "shepherds," are synonymous in the Word of God. It was not she who found the watchmen, but they found her. They were faithful ministers of the gospel or tenders of the sheep; they were looking after the flock and searching for those who were bewildered and in need, and they found her and discovered her condition, as she was seeking her Lord.

In going about the streets, she was doing that which her Beloved told her to do when He commanded her to follow the footsteps of the flock. It was not only that she must take heed to the path in which she found the sheep traveling, but she must feed beside the shepherds' tents. If the watchmen are true and walking close to the Lord, if they can direct her aright, she must have regard to the watchmen. It was but a little while after finding and passing the watchmen, who in this chapter were faithful shepherds and able to help her in her difficulty, that she found her Lord. Although they were near enough to direct her aright, it was not until she had passed them, that she found her Beloved.

Truly, the most faithful shepherd is not the Great Shepherd of the sheep. The brightest reflection of His beauty that is seen upon a servant, is not the revelation of Himself. Those who are the closest to the Lord, who know Him best, can only direct the inquiring soul to the Lord. They can never satisfy the hunger of the heart that is going out for Him. How we praise God for all the help we have received through every chosen vessel that He has used to draw us on toward Him, and into a deeper relation to Himself. With what gratitude to God, do we remember those whom He has used to point out to us a nearer approach to our dear Lord.

How tenderly do we look back upon every faithful servant and child of His, who brought us new light, who stirred within us a deeper hunger for God, who provoked us to holy jealousy and emulation through their godly lives. How we praise God for those who warned and instructed us through the exhortation and admonition that they gave in the hour of need, or in times of weakness. How our hunger for God, and abandonment to do His will and follow Him all the way, have been increased as we have seen that mysterious light, which shines upon the faces of those who habitually walk and talk with God.

While we thank God for every instrument He uses in our lives, how little one or all of these dear ones can be, compared with our Beloved, if in any way, they take His place and draw us to themselves rather than to Himself. When the watchmen found the bride, if she had rejoiced and sat down content; if she had admired and been drawn to the watchmen and been satisfied, she would never have found her Lord. We must esteem every servant and instrument of God "exceeding highly in love for their work's sake;" but we must never permit them to usurp the Lord's place in our lives and affections.

Only a little after the watchmen found her, she found the One whom her soul loved. Four times in these four verses, she calls the Bridegroom, "Him whom my soul loveth." Can we say: "Jesus, Thee alone do I love; it is Thou whom my soul loveth, and Thou alone"? What has not the love of Jesus Christ enabled His followers to do and to endure down through the ages? "We love because He first loved us." It is His love for us that puts strength, endurance, fidelity, into our poor, faltering hearts.

Do you think those precious martyrs saw and feared the fire as the flames enveloped and consumed them at the stake? No! Their eyes were fixed upon their Lord, they endured

as beholding Him who is invisible. Their hearts cried: "O thou, whom my soul loveth!" Do you think Peter shrank from the cross when the time of his departure came? No! Before his Lord went to the Father, He had asked Peter thrice if he loved Him. And as another girded him and carried him whithersoever he would not, as he literally followed his Lord to the cross in crucifixion, his heart exultantly cried: "O thou, whom my soul loveth!" As Paul, the aged, stood in the judgment hall, all forsook him; and the only One who stood by him was He whom his soul loved, even his Lord.

From the beginning of the book, the Bridegroom has been so enshrined in the heart of the bride, that she does not mention His name. Whether she speaks to the daughters of Jerusalem or to the watchmen, whether she speaks to the Bridegroom or about Him, He so fills her heart that she imagines all others must know of whom she is speaking, and who it is whom her soul loveth. How many of the followers of Christ could speak of "Him whom my soul loveth," and have those addressed know whom they meant? Is our love for our Lord so apparent and manifest to those about us that they know there is only one who is filling our hearts and thoughts?

"I held Him and would not let Him go." How her heart rejoices as she finds Him, and she throws her arms about Him as she runs clinging to Him. She has been seeking Him through the night, in the darkness; she has sought Him alone. She has sought Him in the concourse of people and inquired for Him of the watchmen who go about the city. She has wandered here and there through the streets and the broad ways, and at last she finds Him. With a tempest of love and worship, she holds Him fast, lest again He disappears and she is left alone.

The thought is implied that He makes as though He

would go further, as though He is only willing to be held by that soul who will not take a refusal from Him. By faith and prayer, the trembling child of God can hold the King of Glory, so that He will not leave her; she can drive back the enemy, and move the mighty arm of God in her behalf; she can constrain Him to come in and abide with her, and sup with her. How wonderful it is that in ourselves we are so weak, but in Him we are strong; and through His gentleness we are made great.

How much more continuously would our Beloved abide with us if, through diligent search, we found Him in greater revelation; and then through prayer, communion and obedience, we held Him fast and would not let Him go. If our hearts were as hungry for Him and clung to Him as tenaciously as is here pictured, He would never vanish from our spiritual vision. He would not withdraw, but His glory and presence would overshadow us all the time.

She brings Him into the chamber of her mother. The unsaved soul has but one mother, and that is Humanity, represented by Eve, who is the mother of all mankind. The bride remembers when she was keeping the vineyards of the world; when the sons of her mother, "Humanity," set her to do this lowly task, and she neglected her own vineyard. She would bring her Beloved to these kinsmen after the flesh; she longs that they, too, may leave the vineyards of the world, and keep the vineyards of their own souls. Her heart goes out that her Beloved may become their Beloved.

She is not satisfied to have Him only for herself, but she would have Him brought into the house of her mother, Humanity; she would have those of her mother's house receive Him also. She cannot see how they could fail to love Him if she can only bring Him near enough to them. She has been taken up with her own joy and fellowship heretofore, but now the time has come when she would see others accept Him as their Saviour, as their Beloved.

The saved soul has another mother, the Jerusalem that is above which is our mother (Gal. 4:26). Not only does her desire go out to bring Him to her kinsmen after the flesh that they may be saved, but also to her spiritual kinsmen. The time comes when there is such joy in each new revelation of Jesus Christ, that the bride longs to see others drawing closer to Him; she longs that others may behold Him in new light and beauty. She eagerly brings Him to those that already know Him; and with such love and devotion, that their hearts are filled with hunger to taste the love and joy, which they see she has.

Every child of God has two natures, the natural and spiritual; two births, the natural and spiritual; two mothers, Eve, the mother of all after the flesh, and the Jerusalem which is above, the mother of us all in the Spirit.

3:5. **"I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, or by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, until He please."** This is the same warning which she brought to the daughters of Jerusalem in the second chapter. We have already considered it, but there is a difference in motive, which makes the charge different. In the first passage (ch. 2:7), the bride is concerned that her own joy and repose shall not be interrupted; that nothing shall break the fellowship that *she* is having with her Beloved in His Banqueting House. Here she is concerned that nothing shall grieve her Beloved and drive Him away before He is received by her kinsmen after the flesh, or after the Spirit.

How often when God is working and bringing conviction into hearts, just a strain of carelessness or frivolity, a little strife or jealousy, a show of unworthiness or of indifference, will stop His working and turn aside the gracious acts, which He is about to perform. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, in whom ye were sealed unto the day of redemption." With

humble yielding to the Spirit of God, with a careful walk, with patience and longsuffering, must the husbandman wait for the precious fruit, and the ripening of the seed that he has sowed.

When we have brought Christ to those who know Him not, we must patiently and tenderly wait for the decision to be made; neither hurrying the result, nor neglecting the seed, but watching and waiting for God to give the increase. When we bring Christ to those who already know Him, presenting Him in new beauty and testifying to the deeper revelations that He has given us, we must be humble and prayerful. We must earnestly pray that God will create in the hearts of His children a hunger to know Him better; and that they will pay the price to enter into a closer relation with Him than they have had.

It is not only the daughters of Jerusalem who can hinder the growth of the seed, but the one who brings Christ to a soul, can also hinder the work of the Holy Spirit, by inconsistent living, by neglect and indifference. We must not only sow the seed, but by prayer, example, and with encouraging words, we must watch and tend it until the work is established, and the fruit begins to appear.

Canticle Three. *Ch. 3:6 to 5:1*

CHAPTER XVII

"A BODY DIDST THOU PREPARE FOR ME." SOLOMON'S CHARIOT, OR CHRIST OUR SALVATION. 3:6-10.

With chapter 3:6, begins the third Canticle; the historical setting of which is the life of Christ and His ministry while upon earth. This is the interpretation given by those who believe the book is an allegory of Christ and the Church exclusively. The Jews see in the Chariot of Solomon a perfect figurative description of the Jewish Tabernacle. Inasmuch as every part of the tabernacle, from the smallest to the largest detail, was symbolic of Jesus Christ and His work, our hearts are made to rejoice in all of the interpretations that bring glory to our Lord, and help to set Him forth.

The first Canticle ends with the entreaty of the bride, that the daughters of Jerusalem shall "stir not up nor awaken" her Beloved until He please; and the second Canticle closes with the same entreaty, although as we have noted, with a different motive.

3:6-8. **"Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant? Behold, it is the litter of Solomon; threescore mighty men are about it, of the mighty men of Israel. They all handle the sword, and are expert in war; every man hath his sword upon his thigh, because of fear in the night."** This is an exclamation of

wonder and admiration, voiced by those who behold the procession coming up through the wilderness. Such glory and magnificence! such incense and fragrance! such a glittering procession it appears in the distance, so unearthly and strange!

To the Jew, the beginning of this Canticle (ch. 3:6 ff.) is the description of the hosts of Israel, coming up through the wilderness and journeying toward the Promised Land. The Ark of the Covenant is in their midst, surrounded by the thousands of their mighty men; and moving on before His chosen people is the stately, mysterious presence of Jehovah in the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud. As the nations saw God's Ancient People marching on, following that supernatural cloud and fire and the Ark of the Covenant, which went before, they were filled with fear and awe. And they inquired: "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness like pillars of smoke perfumed with myrrh and frankincense?"

It must have been wonderful and awe-inspiring to see between three and four millions of the hosts of Israel, coming up through the wilderness; a mighty multitude of people, marching, moving along through the trackless waste of wilderness, led by the unearthly cloud and fire, which concealed their God. Following this multitude when marching, and hovering over their encampments, arose the smoke from the continual burnt offering and the smoke from the continual, peculiar incense, which was unlike any other incense, and was a symbol of the fragrance of Jesus Christ.

The "Litter" is a symbol of the first Jewish Tabernacle, which was built in the wilderness; in which Jehovah, the great "I AM," dwelt in the midst of the hosts of Israel as they journeyed to the Promised Land. The "Chariot" is a figure of the permanent glorious temple of cedar wood, which Solomon built after their journeyings were over.

The meaning is most precious, according to the other two interpretations, which make it a description of Christ in His

relation to the Church, and to the individual believer. The bride has found and brought the Bridegroom home to her mother's house, and now is seen the Litter in which He came to her. A little later is seen the palanquin, or the "Chariot" of the King, which is the Bridal Chariot in which He brings her to His home.

The "Litter," as applied to Jesus, is a symbol of His human body, which was the tent, or tabernacle, in which He walked when upon earth and ministered among men. It was in this despised tent, that He came to His people; it was in this human "Litter" that He dwelt and learned obedience through the things that He suffered. Through the Veil, that is to say His flesh, He opened a new and living way into the Holiest of all; through His death upon Calvary, He is bringing the redeemed home to Glory.

Not only did those who looked upon the hosts of Israel, ask the question: "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness?" but this question was again asked concerning our Lord at the beginning of His ministry. And from time to time afterward did they question as to who He was, and whence He came. Though this question is asked by saint and sinner upon earth, and by the angelic hosts in Heaven, none but God can ever know all the precious spices and perfumes that Christ gathered while walking alone upon earth.

Truly, He was a root out of a dry ground. Though the scribes and Pharisees, the elders and chief priests, jeered at a prophet coming from Nazareth, they could but know that He was "full of grace and truth." They could but wonder "at the words of grace which proceeded out of His mouth;" and they questioned Him desiring to know who He was and whence He came. When He came up out of the River Jordan, and the Holy Spirit fell upon Him, God bearing witness from Heaven to His Sonship, the question was again asked; and John bore witness: "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world."

Then did the Spirit "drive" Him forth into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil for forty days; the same number of days, as the number of years during which the Jews wandered in the wilderness. When all the temptations were finished, and "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee; and a fame went out concerning Him throughout all the region around," again did they question: "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchantman?"

All who loved God and recognized Jesus as the Messiah, discerned the pillars of smoke and the perfumes, which were resident in Him, and which continually emanated from Him. They knew that never man spake as this Man; and they questioned as to who He was and whence He came.

We can almost hear the question asked in Heaven by the angels, who desire to look into these things: "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness like pillars of smoke perfumed with myrrh and frankincense?" And from the redeemed throng down through the ages, comes the answer: "This is Jesus of Nazareth, the well-beloved and only-begotten Son of God. This is the Lamb of God that hath been slain from the foundation of the world and is carrying away the sin of the world. This is the King of kings and the Lord of lords."

When Christ was upon earth in His human body, there were legions of angels surrounding and ministering to Him. Ever since He was crucified, He has been dwelling upon earth in His spiritual body, which is made up of redeemed souls that are vitally one with Him. They are members of His body, bone of His bones and flesh of His flesh; and through them, His life is continually flowing. They are traveling up through the wilderness with their Solomon in their midst. His glory is overshadowing them, and legions of angels surround and protect His spiritual body, the Church.

Since the departure of our Lord to the courts of Heaven, the same questions are asked concerning His bride as were asked concerning the hosts of Israel, as were asked concerning the Christ of God. The presence and glory of God are discerned, resting upon "the general assembly and church of the first-born;" and many are questioning: "Who are these people that are so peculiar? Whence do they come, and whither are they going?" The closer we walk with God, the more do those who know not God, misunderstand and question concerning us.

The bride is not alone. He is with her and is bringing her home in the bridal Chariot, which He Himself made, and which is described in verses nine and ten. She causes wonder and astonishment in all who behold her, for she seems so weak, and yet she is so strong. She is despised by the world, but the incense and the pillars of smoke are ever with and above her. As her Beloved came up to the Father from the wilderness of this world, with all powders of the merchantman, so is His love coming up, gathering these priceless perfumes as she journeys homeward.

She appears neither glorious nor protected to those who behold her, but He is a wall of fire round about her, and He is the glory within. He guides her with the cloud of His presence, which covers her by day and protects her from the heat of the sun. In the darkest hours, He is a pillar of fire that reveals every danger, and illumines her path so that she walks not in darkness; neither shall she stumble nor fall. Through all the weary journey, when the way is rough, and the darkness of evil is settling down around her, He sheds upon her the glory of His smile and presence. She looks unto Him and is radiant, and her face shall never be confounded.

Not only is she traveling home in this wonderful Chariot, but He has given her a commission to fulfill upon the journey. As He is, so is she in the world. As He brought home to His

Father mountains of spices and fragrance, so has He appointed her to bring home a precious cargo of spices and incense, of perfumes, which, as a merchantman in a far country, she must gather in the wilderness of this world.

The most precious and inspiring feature of this wilderness journey, is that it is only in the desert, the costly spices and gums are found. The spices and gums used in the Jewish worship, were found in the desert of Arabia and in the mountains of Palestine. With much labor were they gathered in far regions; and through many dangers did the merchantman bring them home. It was a long, arduous, dangerous undertaking, but there was great wealth in even one cargo of those spices and powders.

Not even upon the heavenly terraces do these precious perfumes grow, and the bride will never gather any after her earthly journey is over, for it is only in this wilderness, that she can gather sweet spices and perfumes to bring home to her Lord. She cannot gather them in Egypt, nor in the easy places; but it is in the hard places, that the most precious are found. The drier and more barren the wilderness, the hotter the testings and harder the path over which she goes, the more precious are the spices she gathers and brings away with her.

Do you ask what these spices are that the bride of the Lamb is to bring up to her Beloved, and how she is to gather them? It is as she takes up her cross daily, yielding to every nail God drives in, that she begins to gather spices and perfumes to take home. And when they are gathered, they must be prepared by being beaten small before they can be offered to God acceptably.

Are we willing to go through the piercing and crushing process in order to bring home a precious cargo of heavenly fragrance and incense? Are our hearts crying out for a deeper revelation of the gospel, and for it to be operative in our lives? Do not look for the answer in a bed of roses, but at the foot

of the daily cross, outside the city walls. Look for Heaven's perfumes in a wilderness place that no one sees nor understands, excepting Jesus who took the first cargo of spices to Heaven.

Not only must God bring you into the places where these precious spices grow, but you must gather all you find there. We have not bought up the opportunities that God has given us, and many times we have left the spices hanging upon the trees and bushes of Opportunity. We are so distressed by the desert, that our eyes behold not its precious perfumes. These spices, which we gather as we journey along, are the graces and fruit of the Spirit, and the beauties of our Beloved, which are perfected within us only through the things we suffer.

The sweetest perfumes are brought out of the hardest suffering and testings. The pure gums do not come forth from the tree until it is pierced; so with the saints of God, only as they are pierced and bruised, are the precious attributes of Jesus Christ manifested to the glory of God, and to the edification of those about them. As the spices are not found in the fertile plains, neither are the graces and fruit of the Spirit perfected in the smooth places, but in the rough places.

We are told in I Pet. 4: 12-14 that we are to rejoice with exceeding joy when we come into fiery trials and are partakers of Christ's sufferings. We are to count it all joy that, while here in the wilderness, we can suffer for Christ's sake. As we do this, we begin to gather from the bitter shrub, "Suffering," the fragrant incense, "Joy," to take up and present to our Lord.

How do we gather the precious Spice of "Faith"? God brings us to a desert place where everybody and everything fails us; where we must stand upon the air, as it were, with nothing under our feet. We can look nowhere but up to God, and He leaves us hanging there upon the thread of faith, clinging and looking to Him, believing Him. If we do this

without wavering, we begin to add to our cargo the faith that calls the things that are not as though they were, and removes mountains.

How do you get the precious Spikenard of Humility? God lets you be despised and pushed down a little lower by each one around you, until you appear to be misunderstood and deserted by all. In this way, He leads you into the deepest valleys of the wilderness, and keeps you there until you have gathered all of this costly perfume that your Lord intended you to have.

This gum is found in the lowest, most barren places, and if we go far enough to gather it, on our way back to the Mount of God, we shall find all other spices and gums. The desert will not appear so grievous after having perfectly gathered Humility, for it is the foundation of all the attributes that our Lord would have us bring up to Him. Let us not be deceived by gathering human love, human humility, human faith and patience, which are only imitations of the heavenly spices and perfumes. No natural, nor human attributes will ever cross over with us into the Glory-land.

It is through many tribulations, that we enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; and the word tribulation means "affliction, threshing, beating out." It is not joy alone that our precious Lord tells us to gather, but peace; peace when everything is in a tumult about us. Jesus can guard our hearts, even when the threshing is going on.

All these spices and perfumes are found in the desert sands or upon the Mount of God, and they are gathered only as we are traveling home to our Father's house. The wilderness of this world yields for the bride of the Lamb, rich, fragrant cargoes of perfume; and as she journeys along through the trackless wilderness, guided by the presence of her Beloved, all who behold her exclaim: "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?"

"Threescore mighty men are about it, of the mighty men of Israel. They all handle the sword, and are expert in war; every man hath his sword upon his thigh, because of fear in the night." As the angelic hosts guarded our Lord while He was here on earth, so the mountains round about the bride of Christ, are filled with the army of God. The angels of the Lord encamp round about them that fear Him and delivereth them; and many battles are fought between the hosts of God and the hosts of the enemy, for the sake of the elect. The angels, who behold us as we are traveling up through the wilderness, are looking down and desiring to look into this wonderful thing that God is doing; but they can never know the joy of this salvation, for they are only ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them who shall inherit salvation.

How precious it is to our hearts to know that our Lord will not only be at the end of the journey to receive us, but He is traveling with us. He, who is our glorious Head, is journeying along with His Church, which is His body; and together they are going home. He is ever near to support His bride and to encourage her. He is ever near to protect her with His shadow, and to feed her upon hidden manna. She does not need to fear for round about her, there are legions of angels, who are the servants in her Father's house; and they handle the sword and are expert in war. And she has her Beloved traveling with her.

He is ever near to direct and to reprove, to chasten and to comfort her. The battle is not hers, but God's, and she knows He will always be victorious; but she must know how to wield the sword of the Spirit. She must not let it rust through neglect, but have it ever bright and shining, and ready to be used in every time of attack and testing. She must be ready to meet the foe, in whatever way he comes during the dark night of this dispensation; and only "the sword of

the Spirit, which is the Word of God," can put to flight every foe, and bring her out more than conqueror through Him that loved her.

3:9. **"King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon. He made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom** (or "seat") **thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple, the midst thereof being paved with love, for** (or "from") **the daughters of Jerusalem."** He did not plan it and then trust others to carry out His plans; but He planned it, and He built it Himself. Before the foundation of the world, God made the design according to His own purpose, after the counsel of His will which He purposed in Christ Jesus unto the dispensation of the fullness of the times. And when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that He might redeem them that were under the law.

It was Christ who made the Chariot in which to bring His bride home to His Father's house of many mansions. With care, He selected the materials; and in due time, they came together into this indestructible Chariot of State. Christ dwelt on earth in the human body that God prepared for Him, which is symbolized by the "Litter." He gave His human life upon the Cross of Calvary, that He might build this Chariot in which to bring many sons home to Glory, and provide the living stones for the habitation, which God has planned and is building for Himself in the Spirit.

It is only when a man is in Christ Jesus, that He is a new creature (2 Cor. 5:17), "And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Therefore we see that the Chariot is symbolic of Christ, and the salvation that is in Him alone. The members of His body, who, through this salvation, are in Him, and in whom He is still dwelling upon earth, are also seen in this Chariot. Every

material mentioned, shows forth Jesus Christ; and when it is brought together, it is Christ, the Chariot of Salvation.

The "Wood of Lebanon" is the cedar; the choicest wood of the forest, the most durable and fragrant; a symbol of the pure, spotless manhood of Jesus Christ. Only as He partook of flesh and blood and became like unto His brethren, could He redeem humanity; hence are we told that the foundation of this Chariot is built of the cedar of Lebanon, or the sinless manhood of Jesus Christ. The divine Cedar, of which this Chariot of Salvation is built, was being prepared when Christ came down and took the form of man, walking among men and ministering unto them (see notes on ch. 1:17).

But before aught can be built from the cedar, it must be cut down. So with our precious Lord, who is the divine Cedar; before this Chariot of Salvation could be built, the divine Cedar must be cut down; and it was cut down when the Man, Christ Jesus, hung upon the Cross of Calvary (Isa. 53:8).

3:10. **"He made the pillars thereof of silver."** Pillars are a symbol of strength and steadfastness. Four pillars supported the veil, which concealed the Holy of holies; and four pillars are described as being at each corner and supporting the "Covering" of this chariot. "Silver" sometimes means the Word of God, and also purity; but the most important meaning of "silver" in the Jewish worship, is "atonement." It was through giving the silver half shekel, that the Jews made atonement for their souls, and the money was used in building the tabernacle (Exod. 30:11-16).

This great salvation, which covers all sin and iniquity, is upheld by the mighty atonement of Jesus Christ through His finished work upon the Cross of Calvary. The cover of this Chariot of Salvation is upheld by the silver pillars, which are the symbol of the strength and power in Christ's atoning work. Silver abides though it is tried in the hottest fire, and the work

of Jesus Christ will abide forever. This salvation has been brought into effect through the fulfillment of God's Word, which is pure as silver and will never pass away. Jesus Christ upholds all things by the Word of His power.

Oh, that we would let our faith go out to Jesus Christ and to His finished work! Oh, that we would apprehend that these silver pillars of His atoning work can sustain a million worlds like this, and atone for all the sin that could be in them, and then there would be sufficient power and atonement in His Blood for millions of other worlds. Only by the silver pillars of the atonement, can the covering of the Chariot of Salvation be sustained; for there is no covering for sin excepting through the death of Christ on Calvary.

We hide away beneath the covering. Though the tempests blow and the storms beat upon this Chariot, not one part of it can be moved for it is upheld by the atoning work of Jesus Christ. Though all hell oppose the progress of this wonderful Chariot that the King of Glory has built for Himself and His bride, it moves on untouched and mighty, majestic and beautiful, to the accomplishment of the will of Him who planned and built it. Though heaven and earth pass away, these pillars, representing the Word and the plan of God that were fulfilled through Christ's finished work upon Calvary, shall abide forever.

It matters not how trackless the desert through which we travel; in vision, we see the Redeemed of the Lord traveling home in this Chariot that Christ has made through His own finished work. How we praise God that the One who is leading us, knows the way home. He will guide us all the way if we let Him search out the path and choose our resting places, as Jehovah went before His Ancient People in the cloud and the fire and in the Ark of the Covenant. He alone has gone over the path, and He alone knows the way. Though He does not always guide His people by visible fire and mani-

festations, neither does He guide us all in the same way and through the same experiences, He ever leads us on. And we are all in the same Chariot and the same procession, which is coming up out of the wilderness.

"Bottom," or literally, the "seat," is a figure of the mercy seat in the Jewish Tabernacle, which covered the Ark of the Covenant and upon which the presence of Jehovah rested. The mercy seat was a symbol of Jesus Christ, our Mercy Seat, and it was made of pure gold, symbolic of His divine nature. Only once a year at the mercy seat in the Jewish Tabernacle, did the high priest make atonement for the sins of the people. But we can come to Jesus Christ our Mercy Seat and there abide, and through Him we can continually have access to God.

As the mercy seat in the Jewish Tabernacle covered and preserved the Word of God, so our Mercy Seat covers and fulfills the Word of God; preserving all His covenants and promises, giving access to God, and making atonement for those who are not able to keep the commandments of God perfectly. "For how many soever be the promises of God, in Him is the yea; wherefore also through Him is the Amen, unto the glory of God through us" (2 Cor. 1:20). "For through Him we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father" (Eph. 2:18).

We find communion and fellowship with God only from above and through our Mercy Seat, Christ, even as He promised to commune with His Ancient People from above the mercy seat in the Jewish Tabernacle (I John 2:2). "He is the propitiation (or "mercy seat") for our sins;" in the Greek, the word translated "propitiation" really means "mercy seat." The meaning brought out by this rendition is most precious, and seems to draw us to Him in a more intimate relation and love.

How wonderful is this mighty, living Mercy Seat, through whom we have access to God! This Mercy Seat that is also

the High Priest who ministers in our behalf, and ever lives to make intercession for us. This Mercy Seat and High Priest is also the Sacrifice of God. As we come to Him, we find access to the throne of grace and receive mercy, and grace to help in time of need.

"The covering of it of purple." This typifies the veil, which separated the Holiest of all from the Holy place, and concealed from sight the Ark of the Covenant, with the golden mercy seat and the golden cherubim overshadowing it. Above the mercy seat and between the two cherubim, the presence of Jehovah dwelt. When Israel journeyed, the veil was taken down and the Ark was covered with it, therefore it was called "The covering veil" (Numbers 4:5). It was made of fine twined linen, which is symbolic of Christ's pure, spotless manhood; and it was a perfect symbol of Jesus Christ in His perfect character and work as the Son of Man and the Son of God.

Upon the linen appeared the blue, which showed Christ's heavenly character; the scarlet, which showed Him as the suffering Saviour; the purple, which showed Him as the royal One, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords. Only the purple—the royal—is spoken of here, being emphasized because it is a description more particularly from the kingly viewpoint, and is looking forward to His reign. But the other two colors are not left out, for the color, purple, is made by combining blue and scarlet.

This is true not only of earthly colors, but is also true in the symbols used in God's Word to portray Jesus Christ and our relation to Him. The bride must be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, which is the heavenly, or the blue. "If we suffer with Him (which is the scarlet) we shall also reign with Him" (which is the royal, or the purple).

These colors and the distinguishing characteristics of Jesus Christ, which they symbolize, will also be the peculiar

characteristics and colors of the overcomers. And the overcomers are they who shall make up the bride of Christ. None shall wear the purple until they are without spot or wrinkle or any such thing; and thus the heavenly blue is put on. None shall sit with Him upon His throne until fellowship with His sufferings brings forth the scarlet.

Upon the veil of the temple were wrought the Cherubim, which are symbolic of God's majesty and power. As Jehovah dwelt between the Cherubim of old, so does Solomon, our Prince of Peace, dwell in the Mercy Seat; and upon this golden seat in the Chariot, He travels up with us through the wilderness. Upon this golden seat, His bride is also traveling home to her Father's house of many mansions. She is covered and protected by the purple Veil of Covering, even her Lord, and this covering is upheld by the silver pillars of His atoning work upon the Cross of Calvary.

"The midst thereof being paved with love, from (or "for") **the daughters of Jerusalem."** The midst of the Chariot of Salvation is paved, or inlaid, with the love of God, which planned this uttermost salvation, and constrained Him to give His only-begotten Son, that all who believed upon Him might not perish, but have everlasting life. The Chariot is inlaid with the many acts and words, with all the promises and plans of God; which come from, and reveal His everlasting love wherewith He hath loved us.

Eternal ages can never exhaust nor reveal the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; the love that planned the building of this wonderful Chariot of Salvation. Eternity will not suffice to reveal the fathomless love of Christ, which moved Him to come down to this sin-cursed earth and take the form of earth-born man; becoming obedient to death, even the death of the cross; that, through death, He might build a Chariot in which to bring the ransomed home.

In this Chariot does the bride come up through the wilderness of earth where no water is found; through "the great and terrible wilderness" with its fiery serpent, the devil, and its scorpions of evil spirits, and heat of sin and iniquity. But He brings her water out of the Rock, and that Rock is Christ; He feeds her upon the Manna which the fathers knew not, and that Hidden Manna is Christ.

The midst of the Chariot is inlaid not only with God's love to us, but it is inlaid with the love of the Redeemed to Him: "For the love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given unto us."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE CROWN OF ESPOUSAL. 3:11.

3:11. "Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon, with the crown wherewith His mother hath crowned Him in the day of His espousals, in the day of the gladness of His heart." The "Daughters of Zion" in this verse is a figure, not only of those who are closest to the King, but also of those who have longings to behold Him, those who would gladly hear His voice. Whether it is the sinner who is seeking Him that He may speak peace to his soul, or the Christian who is longing to go deeper into Him and to follow faster after Him, all are commanded to go forth and behold Him. The voice of the Spirit comes to every human creature in command and in entreaty, to go forth and behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.

As the Lamb of God that was slain for their sins must sinners first behold Him hanging upon the Cross of Calvary. Their eyes cannot see the many crowns with which He is crowned in Revelation, until they have first seen upon Him the crown with which His mother, Humanity, crowned Him that day when the earth quaked, and darkness covered the earth as the veil of the temple was rent in twain. They must first see upon Him the crown of thorns and suffering, which He wore that day when the heavenly hosts beheld the King of Glory, the Prince of Peace who was bringing peace to the earth, hanging upon the cross; and saw Him dying there.

Christ never spoke of Himself as the Son of Mary, but always called Himself "The Son of Man." His mother was Humanity through the seed of David, but His Father was God.

It was His mother, Humanity, who placed upon His brow the crown of suffering, the crown of thorns and shame. It was the sin of the human race that brought Christ down to become a man, to wear the crown that pressed His brow when He poured out His life a ransom for many. The crown of thorns that He wore, was but the outward shadow of the crown of suffering which could be seen by no eye save the eye of God; and will never be understood save by the Father.

The day of His crucifixion was the day of His betrothal to those who would prepare themselves to go in to the marriage supper of the Lamb. All humanity could be in that blest company, but though "many are called (invited), few are chosen" (selected). When He saw Judas go out to betray Him, He said: "Now is the Son of Man glorified;" when He said this, He was looking forward to the day of His death, which was the day of His betrothal.

It was because He was looking forward to the day of His betrothal to His bride, that He longed to eat that last passover with His disciples and said: "With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." This was not as other passovers for this was the fulfillment of all others. The time had come for the dispensation of grace to be ushered in through the offering up of the Lamb of God, whom the Jewish passover lamb prefigured. Thus, were the types and shadows of the old dispensation done away through the substance; namely, Christ in His redemptive work, and through the bringing in of a better covenant.

It was also the instituting of the betrothal supper, which He ate with those first disciples, who had been with Him in His sufferings and ministry upon earth. They were the first-fruit of the bride for whom He was about to pour out His life; and He left this supper as a sacred memorial, not only to them, but to all who would believe upon His Name; commanding them to observe it, and to eat and drink it in remembrance of Him.

Upon this day, He wore the crown of thorns and of shame, which His mother, Humanity, pressed upon His brow; the crown of suffering and agony caused by the Father's face being turned from Him. It was a day of awful anguish, but it was the day of the gladness of His heart for He could say: "I have accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do . . . now I come to Thee." He had finished that which the Father had given Him to do. He had betrothed to Himself His bride, who is made up of the Blood-washed company that take up their cross daily and follow in His footsteps, counting all that the world can give as refuse, that they may know Him. When we first hear the voice of God calling us to go forth and look upon our King, we hardly know what it will mean. To "go forth," is to leave the place where we now are, and those with whom we are associated, and to go outside the city walls if we would behold Him. It is not only to behold Him in His glory sitting upon a throne; not only to see all that shall be ours if we follow on to know Him as God would have us know Him, and as we must know Him if we are to reign with Him; it is not only to see Him thus, but it is first to see Him hanging upon the cross and to apprehend that we were in Him as He hung and suffered there.

It is to see Him despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. It is to see Him deserted by all, not only by those who were half-hearted, but by those who were nearest Him and who walked with Him day by day, by those who had left father and mother, children and lands, giving up much for His sake. As we behold Him in this light, we hear Him say: "If any man would come after me let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me."

When we come to Him for salvation and first behold Him, as far as we know, we leave all for Him; but at every onward step, He shows us that there are other things that we have not seen, which must be left if we go forth and behold Him

more intimately. If we are to behold Him, we cannot stay where we are for we are told to "go forth;" to get up and hasten away, leaving all behind that would hide Him from our spiritual vision.

At first, when we hear the voice of God telling us to go forth and behold Jesus Christ, we have much in our hearts and before our eyes that will obscure the vision of our Lord. We must leave all this behind and "go forth;" leaving the flesh and self-life behind, the desires and plans, the opinions and thoughts that were not of Him. And as we leave all and go forth, as we abide with Him outside the city wall, He will give us His desires, plans, beliefs and thoughts in the place of ours.

It is a continual leaving, leaving, and the nearer and dearer He becomes to us, the more rejoiced we are to leave everybody and everything for Him. At every step of the way, we must look up and behold Him on the cross; and when we see Him there, God will let us see ourselves crucified in Him.

But where are we to go? Outside the gate, outside the city wall. Do you think that we shall see Him if we stay inside the city? inside with all those who do not love Him enough to go out to Him? if we stay with those who hate Him and are half-hearted? If we do not behold the Saviour in His agony, do you think that He will anoint our eyes to behold the King in His beauty? No! It is as we "go forth" that we behold Him. And we must first behold Him as our suffering Saviour, before we can behold Him as our King, and discern His beauty as He sits upon the throne of our lives. It is as we leave everybody and everything that stands between Him and us, between us and God's best, that we behold Him.

It is when we seem to be deserted by all, and evil is spoken of us because we have left all and gone forth to Him, that our vision of Him becomes more distinct and grows sweeter. It is when we have gone forth and are alone with Him, that

all other sounds are hushed; and His voice becomes precious in our ears and in our hearts. When we have left all and gone out to Him, how small and insignificant does all else appear; the people and things, the desires and plans, which have seemed precious to us before, but which have hindered us from going with our Lord alone and becoming like Him.

God has put us here that we should know Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and that we may be prepared to live in His presence throughout Eternity. The multitudes are swinging on toward those endless ages, and they will never get ready to live. They think they are living here on earth, they are taken up with unworthy, trivial things, the things of Time; and Eternity is just before them. Not only the world, but many of God's people, in the place of being taken up with Christ alone, are taken up with trivial things, with unworthy desires and non-essentials. God has given us this little breath, called "Time," in which to prepare and prove us; in which to teach us to see no man save Jesus only; and to behold Him so perfectly by faith, that He will not be more real when we behold Him face to face. All this life is for, is to prepare for those millions of years of Eternity, in which every human creature shall have a never-ending existence, whether they are saved or lost, whether they spend it in Heaven or in Hell.

Reader, do you know that if we are saved, we shall live as long as He will live? that we shall be with Him in never-ending joy and glory? It is wonderful to know that you have eternal life, and are saved because you are in Jesus and His Spirit is within you (2 Cor. 5:17); to apprehend that you are bone of His bones and flesh of His flesh. It is wonderful to know that the Holy Spirit is dwelling in you.

How our hearts rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory when we think of our Lord and what He is to us even here on earth. How He leads us on and talks to us of the wonderful calling with which God has called us! how He re-

veals to us that we are bespoken to be His bride! Only those who overcome will be His bride and sit with Him upon His throne. If we are in that company, we must go forth outside the city wall; out of the enclosure in which is all that has been dear to our old lives; all that we have hitherto grasped with eager hands.

If He is the One and the only One whom our soul loveth, and we apprehend that we are bespoken by Him to be His wife, our eyes will be eagerly watching for His appearing. If our hearts are hungry for His tokens of love, and our ears are ever open Heavenward to catch every sound of His voice and hear the first hint concerning that which He would have us do or leave, oh, how our hearts will rejoice as we hasten to obey, as we "go forth" to behold Him more clearly and walk with Him alone!

With every deeper vision God gives us of our Lord, we will leave something behind, and we shall suffer something. The higher the step and the more precious the vision, the harder will be the suffering. But this is the joy of it all, that when we make a choice and choose Jesus Christ, He leads us up higher, and we behold Him there; and as we look at Him, there is nothing else that counts. Never do we hear Him calling us to go forth and behold Him, that we do not have a more ravishing revelation of Him when we obey. As we obey, it is always to leave some one or something, it is always to walk more alone with Him; but it is also to behold Him more clearly and intimately as bleeding, dying, risen, and glorified. It is to know more fully the depth of His love; it is to have a greater hunger for Him to be all and in all to us; it is to make Him more and more our only consolation and confidant.

All who are saved have gone forth and beheld Him, but God is calling us to go forth in a still deeper way. We cannot see Him through the wall, it is too thick; and while we are on the inner side of it, there are too many hands and bands hold-

ing us back. But as we go forth to Him without the gate, bearing His reproach, bearing our cross along each line as God shows it to us; as we choose Christ every time a choice is presented; though the suffering increases, no tongue can express the joy there is in the suffering. We have a deeper longing to leave everything and everybody that we may hasten out and behold our Lord in greater separation and in clearer revelation. All to which we would cling, all that God shows us is hedging us in, all, all, is but dust to that soul that goes without the city wall every time the voice of his Beloved calls him.

Let us never forget that it was our sins that pressed the crown of thorns and anguish upon His head. Let us ever see Him thus, for only as we behold Him on the cross and see His work that He did there, can our vision be purified and prepared to see Him in His beauty. He will not come inside the gate that we may see Him. He will not trust Himself to us and give us His confidence before He can trust us. He will not take us into the Banqueting House and reveal Himself to us until He has prepared and proved us. It does not take a great sin or disobedience to hide His face, to raise a wall between Him and us. Even a cobweb will keep the dew from falling on the grass; and even a cobweb will hide His precious face, and keep the dew of His presence and dealing from falling upon our souls.

Let us go outside the city wall that we may behold Him; let us leave everything which is in the city that our eyes may be anointed to behold Him who is altogether lovely. Let us go forth unto Him bearing His reproach. When the earth is in our eyes, we cannot behold Jesus; when anything else is before our eyes, we cannot behold Him. It matters not what has come before our vision, everything must be cleared away if we would see and hear Him.

Do we desire visions of the Lord? The only way in which

we can see the Lord or have visions of Him, is to go forth alone to Him and leave all behind; is to separate ourselves unto Him and get alone with Him. If we are willing, God will bring us up to each thing, and He will not only give us grace to take every step, but will make us see how little and vile everything that we have left is when compared with our precious Lord.

Oh, how He is speaking to His bride about the cross! Wherever we turn in the Word of God, we see only Jesus and the cross; not only *His cross*, but *our cross*. Every sign points to the near Coming of the Lord, and there is so much to be done in each of us before we are ready for that day of days. I believe that only the bride will see Him when He comes for her, but if it were possible for others to see Him, many of His people would scarcely know their Lord; for since the time they saw Him hanging on the cross as their Saviour, they have caught only passing glimpses of Him.

Our eyes must be anointed and trained here on earth to behold Him. More and more must we behold Him who is invisible and lose sight of all else that would hide His face; He must fill our vision here if we would behold Him when He comes for His bride. We must go forth from all else, and look upon Him with so much love and abandonment, with such oneness of heart and determination of seeing Jesus only, that the vision of our Lord will grow brighter and brighter every day. And all the world and all within the walls, will sink into oblivion because of the glory of that revelation.

If we could see how little of the time we have His face before our eyes, how little of the time we are in touch and communion with Him, how much of the time we forget Him and have not gone forth to behold Him, how much of the time cobwebs and walls are between us and Him, it would spur us on to go out and seek Him. Nothing counts if we fail to behold Him, fail to see what He has done for us, fail

to see the suffering, the crown of thorns that the sin of humanity put upon His head.

If we hearken to the call of God and go forth and behold Him, as we obey, we shall hear His tender voice clearer, clearer at every step: "Go forth, My bride, My spouse, and behold thy Bridegroom! Behold My head pierced with the cruel crown of My espousal to thee. Behold My hands and My feet pierced and bleeding for thee. Behold the love in My pierced heart for thee. Go forth, My bride, in ever-increasing separation, and behold Me! Then shall thine eyes behold Me when I come for thee, and thou shalt sit with Me upon My throne. Then shalt thou behold Me crowned with many crowns. But to thee, My bride, My spouse, the most beautiful crown of all, will be that crown of thorns and agony, which I wore for thee on the day of the gladness of My heart, when I betrothed thee to Myself and sealed the betrothal with My own precious blood."

O wondrous love that could love us while we were yet sinners! O unknown agony that is forever hidden from human understanding, which caused Him to sweat drops of blood for you and me! O precious Lamb of God, who was led to the slaughter and opened not His mouth! This was the day of His betrothal, even this day of days when He finished that eternal work of Redemption, and bespoke unto Himself those dust-born creatures, whom He redeemed from the fall and from the hand of the enemy, and from the power of sin and death.

CHAPTER XIX

THE BEAUTY AND SEPARATION OF THE BRIDE. 4:1.

4:1. **"Behold, thou art fair, My love; behold, thou art fair; thine eyes are as doves behind thy veil"** (or "locks"). The bride of Jesus Christ is beautiful in the eyes of her Beloved, and in the eyes of God the Father. Through the working and operation of the Holy Spirit, she is all glorious within and without. He rejoices in the white, shining robe of His own righteousness, in which He sees her arrayed; and which is becoming more and more manifested as she follows on to "know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, becoming conformed unto His death."

In the Beloved is she accepted by the Father; all unworthiness has been put away, and His worthiness alone appears before God. In Him, she has had her redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of her trespasses according to the riches of His grace. It is through this grace, which, like waves of a mighty, eternal ocean, has flowed from the Father through Jesus Christ, that all the blackness that sin and the world have left upon her, has been put away; and she has become white and fair through His blood.

There are times when we are going through hard things, that we are crushed and feel so black and unworthy of our dear Lord, that we almost long to be wiped out of existence because it seems that we can never measure up or be to His glory. As we lie down at His feet pouring out before Him our love and feeling of unworthiness, we hear Him say: "Be-

hold, thou art fair, My love; behold, thou art fair." If He looked upon us and judged us by our weakness and failures, by our willfulness and stumbling around, He could never say this; but He is looking at His own robe of righteousness, which is beginning to cover us.

Though He encourages us, He is expecting that we shall put on His attributes and beauty, until from our mouths and lives, and from every step we take, His image and glory shall shine out before all eyes that behold us. We have walked in our own ways and used our lips and our members for ourselves instead of letting Him use them; and we forget that there is nothing small in our lives, but everything is important and tells for Eternity.

When we see ourselves as we are before Him, so unworthy, so black and unpromising, we are nearly in despair; and if it were not for His encouragement in our souls, we could not go on. It is remarkable, that not once in this precious book does He tell the bride that she is black. Only once, when she is nearing the end of the journey and is coming up out of the wilderness leaning upon Him, does He remind her of where He found her as a sinner. He only tells her of this, in order that she may "remember all the way" which He led her to prove and humble her; and in order that she may love Him more.

When the Lord speaks of the bride, it is always as she is in Him, and He never discourages the honest soul that is following hard after Him and wants to count everything but loss and lose everything for His sake. Are you willing to give up all for Him? To those whose hearts are toward Him, and who really are willing to lose everything for Him, though they may stumble a little at times, He takes them on and does not continually tell them how black they are. And yet our Lord shows us our shortage and what must be done; and when we are disobedient, He does not let one thing pass, for which we thank Him.

It is through this fathomless grace, that the bride has been separated from the world and has become the "Love" of Him whom she once hated and despised, whom she reviled and persecuted, whom she spit upon and crucified afresh each time the Holy Spirit dealt with, and convicted her. She is engraven upon the palms of His hands and upon His heart. She, and she alone is His "Love," the one who is the fairest of all others in His eyes. She is the one lily among all the daughters, who are but thorns compared to her. She is the one for whom He has suffered such grief and agony that He might present her to Himself as glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or blemish or any such thing.

He has provided the garment that she must wear; it is the robe of righteousness, which was prepared when the Lamb of God was slain on the cross. As the covering for Adam and Eve was made through the slain victim, so the covering for the bride of the Second Adam was made through the slain Lamb of God. It is through Him, the bride is made beautiful and glorious.

"The glory which Thou hast given Me I have given unto them; that they may be one, even as We are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and lovedst them even as Thou lovedst Me. Father, I desire that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world." "I am glorified in them." It is beyond the human apprehension that Christ could be glorified in us. His love is beyond our comprehension, but we can rest down upon the Word of God and rejoice, that, though we do not apprehend the love of Christ for His bride, we can rest in that love in peace and joy; for it is an everlasting love.

The beauties of the bride of Christ are described by seven

features of feminine beauty and seven comparisons drawn from nature. The perfect figure, "seven," symbolizes the perfection of the comeliness of the bride. This perfect beauty can only come from transfiguration into the image of Christ, and this comeliness of feature and form is perfected by the work of the Holy Spirit within.

When our Lord praises us, it does not uplift and harm us as do the praise and flattery of man. He does not go beyond the truth in His commendations, and He points out to us those places where we are not yet partaking of His image; in this way, He applies the oil and the wine. He often gives the wounds of a "friend," but He also heals us. He must needs "smite" us that we may be chastened, but it is always His loving hand that "binds us up."

We have already commented upon the bride's eyes being "as doves" (ch. 1:15), but there are many precious meanings in the Bridegroom comparing the bride's eyes to doves. The dove was "clean," and was offered in sacrifice by those who were too poor to bring up the larger animals that were set apart to be used as sacrifices in the temple worship. After the birth of Jesus, Mary, His mother, because "her means sufficed not for a lamb" (Lev. 12:8), brought two doves up to the temple as a sacrifice for cleansing. This moves our hearts the more, when we remember that the bride is called His "dove."

Steadfastly does the dove watch for the first rays of dawn: faithfully does she return at her appointed times for she "knows her seasons." Thus the bride can see the approach of the dawn, when to others all is dark; and she is looking and longing for the return of her Heavenly Bridegroom. She has a single eye, and there are no double motives nor selfish designs with her, but she has her eyes fixed steadfastly upon her Beloved. In the Scriptures, the "eye" is the figure of light and illumination, and it is as we know the Truth and walk in

it, that we are purified and see God; for only the pure in heart shall see God.

"Thine eyes are as doves behind thy locks. Thy hair is as a flock of goats, that lie along the side of Mount Gilead." Mount Gilead was shaped like the head and shoulders of a man; and large flocks of goats with long, fine, silken hair, could be seen grazing and lying down upon its steep sides, until it appeared to be crowned with hair.

In the Word of God, long hair is the symbol of separation and subjection. How preciously is this consecration and separation set forth in the Nazarite of the old dispensation. Samuel, Samson, with many others in the Old Testament, and John the Baptist in the New Testament, were set apart unto God from their mother's womb. The latter was in the desert until his ministry began, and who knows the revelations that he received while there alone with God, and the communion that he had with Him. Jesus said that none greater than he, had been born of woman.

One of the most notable Nazarites of the Old Testament times, was Samson. Upon his head grew seven locks of hair, which had never been cut. The long hair was a token of separation, and the number of locks, "seven," a symbol of perfection. It was not in the hair of Samson, that his strength lay; his hair was only the outward sign of the secret relation and vow that bound him to God.

What power there was in that holy relation between Samson and God! a covenant that God ever honored, as long as Samson honored it and kept it a secret between Jehovah and himself. Though his life, many times, appears inconsistent to us; as long as he had regard to that which his long hair signified, and held it sacred between himself and God, God was with him, and his strength was unabated.

Thus flows down over the bride's shoulders the beautiful, unshorn hair, which is the sign of her separation and sub-

jection to her Lord and Master. She is pictured here with her hair of separation hanging down and covering her from every gaze that would contaminate her. This separation begins in the heart, first working mightily within.

It is not in the outward separation, that the power lies; many, down through the ages, have separated themselves from man, hiding in caves and cells; but it profited nothing if God were not in it. The power is in the inward separation, which does not require isolation, but is ofttimes perfected in great stress of circumstances and in a full, busy life. Some are perfected when mingling with sinners along the lines of duty or business.

We must cut off every object of love and affection that usurps Christ's place; we must pour out our love to Him more fervently and exclusively as the days go by. As we do this, we shall be cut off from those who are not filled with the same devotion toward Him, and our separation unto Him will be perfected.

When God first puts the cry within us that we may be separated unto Him, we do not realize what it will mean. To have this prayer answered, all we need to do is to look to Him, to follow Him, to stand for the Truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, to refuse to compromise in any way, or to follow error. As we take this path of fidelity to Him, our locks will grow, and we shall be beautiful in His eyes.

Have you thought that when you know the gospel, and it is operating in your life, it will attract people to you, and that they will rejoice with you? Paul said he was separated unto the gospel; and it is not only being separated unto the gospel, but the gospel separates. Those who are not following on with the Lord have no locks of separation, and they will never admire the bride's long hair, which makes her appear peculiar and unlike themselves. The world and worldly Christians (?) do not know the meaning of this separation.

The longer and thicker the bride's hair grows, the more the world and those who are not going on with the Lord, criticise her appearance. They see no beauty in this crown of separation; to them, it is only a sign of peculiarity, and an evidence that she feels herself better than they are. Though the world mocks at the soul who is separated unto God; deep in their hearts, they despise the Christian who is inconsistent, professing and preaching one thing, and living like the world and sinners.

There is a secret betrothal binding the bride of Christ to Himself, which separates her from all others and from everything that it not of Him. He came and died for her, He shed His blood that she might be cleansed and separated unto Himself.

As this mysterious relation between her and the Lord goes on to perfection, and is entered into with increasing abandonment, the locks of separation become thicker, longer, and more beautiful. And the hair of the bride appears as a flock of goats that lie along the sides and hang on the crags of Mount Gilead. In all things, her Lord has the preëminence and reigns supreme in her life. She submits herself to Him at all times, she is pure and separated from all others, she is keeping her robes spotless.

How many times, we have yielded to the flesh and failed to live in the Spirit. How many times, the children of God have compromised out of regard for the feelings of friends and relatives, of some one who is in error; or in order to retain the friendship of those who do not love the Lord. The transgression of this law of separation has taken many a child of God out of the race; they wanted to be kind to somebody, and it was in the "natural." They not only hindered themselves, but they confirmed others in the error they were embracing. There is nothing that will confirm a person in the wrong stand he is taking, like going and standing with him.

Those about the bride do not know of the fidelity that keeps her eyes ever upon her Lord, watching through the darkest hours for the signs of His return. They do not know of the secret meetings that she has with her Beloved, of the hidden table, of the reproofs and encouragements. They do not know of the work that He is doing within her, and how the robe, which He died that she might put on, is little by little appearing in His sight. They cannot see the great love wherewith He loved her, and which binds her to Him; they cannot see that His shadow is over her, and that she is engraven upon His hands. They cannot see that He has commenced to ornament her with the adorning that will fit her to be His wife, and to sit with Him upon His throne.

All this and manifold more, none can see whose eyes are not anointed to behold the supernatural. Only as the spiritual vision is protected by the locks of separation does it become strong and clear. As the bride is separated unto Him and unto His Truth, her eyes are protected, her vision is perfected, and she beholds "great and mighty things" which she knew not; she beholds "wondrous things" out of His law; she looks upon the unseen and eternal things; she endures as she beholds Him who is invisible. The more her separation is perfected, the more clearly she sees the spiritual and unseen.

Just as the glare and heat of the sun will weaken and impair a man's natural eyesight if it is not protected, causing pain and weakness and sometimes resulting in sunstroke and death; so, without the shelter and protection of separation unto God, the spiritual vision will be weakened, resulting in spiritual blindness and sometimes in death. Such a man can see nothing, or if he is able to see aught, he does not see it as it is.

Though the world and half-hearted, compromising Christians may scorn and not understand the long hair of the bride, they are silenced when the power and presence, when the ap-

proval of God shines upon those who are counting all things but refuse for the excellency of the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Heavenly Bridegroom will never have anybody in the bride, that is not true to Him; and this is going to mean more than we have apprehended. His eyes detect every infidelity and spot; He knows where each of us has not been true to Him; He knows all that is within us, He cannot be deceived, for everything is naked and laid open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. Would the favor of anybody or the pleasure of mingling with all others, outweigh His favor and communion? Would it pay us if we gained the whole world, and had our own way, but lost that which our Lord has for us?

Those who go through with Jesus are going to be very peculiar, for the separation itself will be a stumblingblock to others. Let us remember that every separation that is of God, will bring persecution and misunderstanding. Many of God's people, who were once in the race and had the glory of God resting upon them, went back or fell by the wayside because somebody could not understand why they should be peculiar and separated. They went back to people, but not to God.

We are encouraged as we remember that Samson's hair grew again, and he killed more in his death than he had killed in his life. All of us have had our locks shorn at one time or another by the blandishments of the world and the flesh. We have had our strength sapped away through infidelity to our Lord, through giving away to our own flesh or that of somebody else. Let us turn unto our Lord with greater zeal and fidelity, and our locks will grow until all their beauty and strength are restored.

Oh, that we may go forward with those seven locks of separation uncut! with not one strand uneven and disfigured through being cut and haggled by the shears of the world! Let us seek our Beloved and yield to Him, that this token of

consecration may be beautiful, long, shining, and crown us like a flock of goats upon Mount Gilead.

As we fully partake in the death of Jesus Christ, the enemy will be destroyed with such slaughter and victory as we have never known before. God will be glorified as the power of our identification with Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection operates within us, and we become more than conquerors through Him that loved us. The impossible will become possible as we go from strength to strength. Mountains will remove, doors of brass and bars of iron will be broken in pieces. The walls of every walled city shall fall down as we march around them, and God will get all the glory!

CHAPTER XX

THE BRIDE'S GRACES IN FAITH, SPEECH, AND HUMILITY. 4:2-3.

4:2. **"Thy teeth are like a flock of ewes that are newly shorn, which are come up from the washing, whereof every one hath twins, and none is bereaved among them."** A flock of ewes newly shorn are symmetrical and perfect in form. One translation gives it: "A flock of ewes of one size." Whether we accept the one or the other translation, the meaning is the same; namely, that the bride's teeth are perfect and even, with none missing. They are not only like a flock of symmetrical, newly shorn sheep, but like the ewes that come up from the water after they have been washed. They are white, pure, beautiful; no blemishes, no uncleanness, and none lacking.

When we remember that food must be masticated and prepared by our teeth before it can be swallowed and assimilate to the nourishment of our bodies, we can see the place the teeth of the bride have, and their relation to the spiritual health and progress. We are commanded to feed upon Christ, to eat His flesh and drink His blood. The prophet said: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy words were unto me a joy and the rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by thy name." Jesus said: "I am the bread of life; he that cometh unto Me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst." He is the Bread of life, and it is only by faith that we can feed upon Him, it is only by faith that we can drink of the water of life.

This faith of the bride, through which she continually feeds

upon the Hidden Manna, Jesus Christ, through which she feeds upon the written Word until it becomes nutriment to the whole being, is represented by a flock of strong, perfect ewes, newly shorn, which have come up from the washing. It is this faith that guides and draws the soul to that portion of the Word of God, which, when applied, will cleanse away every spot. It is the setting forth of that operative faith that appropriates the Word of God, and masticates the spiritual food which God provides, until it becomes flesh in the life.

Every touch of unbelief has been cut away. All effort of human faith, which profits no more than any other operation of the flesh, has been shorn, leaving only the perfectly shaped teeth. Every one is mated that the mastication may be perfectly done; all decay and uncleanness have been washed away, and the bride stands forth, provided with the faith of the Son of God.

Many of the children of God have such irregular faith, such broken and decayed faith; many have lost some of their teeth of faith, and those remaining are so sensitive and loose, that they are of little use. When they come to the Word of God, they have no way of appropriating that which He has provided; and they are unable to claim His precious and exceeding great promises. They cannot understand, or masticate the Word of God and receive nourishment.

They do not have life more abundant because they are not able to feed upon the Bread of life abundantly. If they swallow the Word of God intellectually and without mastication, it does not nourish them; and they have spiritual indigestion and become spiritually sick. Not comprehending the real Truth, and the Word not being rightly divided and apprehended, they become discouraged and fall into error or fanaticism.

Only through the perfect faith, which is set forth under the description of perfect natural teeth, can there be spiritual

health. Such teeth can feed in the green pastures, which is also implied by the figure that the Holy Spirit takes to describe the teeth; that is, a flock of newly shown ewes. We can almost see them, white, shapely, and all of one size, as they feed here and there in the pasture of the Great Shepherd. They move on together through the dew-ladened grass, pure white against its green velvet; they eat and meditate, they lie down and rest in the pasture provided for them. Thus does the faith of the bride follow the leading of her Lord, as He leads her in the green pastures of His Word; as He reveals Himself to her more and more, and calls upon her to feed upon the Bread of life more continuously and abundantly.

Why is it that our spiritual teeth are in such a sad condition? Many times we have hardly faith for a little thing; we have only a few teeth, and most of them have lost their mates, so that they are all but useless. This faith, as we have before implied, refers especially to feeding upon the Son of God and taking things from Him. It is a faith that increases and grows, and in the bride, we see that it has grown mightily and is perfected into that faith to which nothing is impossible.

When we get down in simple confidence, God meets the faith that we have; and if we maintain this attitude, there is nothing that grows so rapidly as faith, for God ever waters it by meeting and encouraging us along the way. If we press through into His presence, our faith operates and He meets us; and our faith grows in a wonderful way, becoming stronger for the next test. In the natural, babies do not have teeth, neither do babes in the Lord have mighty faith to feed upon His deep truths; but God metes out to them milk, the food that is prepared for babes. He sends them His Word and promises, presented in such a way that they are able to take them; and He gives more than they can ask or think, not according to their faith, but according to His grace and mercy.

With the babe, cutting teeth is a painful, natural process

for they come through with pain and inflammation; so it is with the teeth of faith in the Christian. The only way in which faith can be perfected, is through pain and suffering; it is when the impossible faces us, that the pressure brings our teeth of faith through, and they are perfected by using them. There is a fact in connection with this, of which we may well take notice for our edification and warning. Those things that God allows to face the babe in the Lord, are just as great mountains to his babyhood, as the great and impossible things with which the full-grown Christian is faced.

As the child of God goes on, believing and stepping out as God leads, his faith appears and grows. It is perfected and becomes like the perfect natural teeth in the mouth of a full-grown man. He finds that the things that seemed hard at the beginning of a life of faith, look small to a retrospective examination. If he is faithful and obedient, his strength and confidence increase and are perfected at every onward step. He finds that the testings of the full-grown Christian, which would have been impossible for him to face victoriously in his early Christian life, are no harder to overcome than those testings and trials, that appeared so grave and important to his babyhood.

But there is another precious symbolism in here. We are not told that it is a flock of *sheep,* but a "flock of ewes;" that is, a flock of female sheep. This is a symbol of fruitfulness. None is bereaved, all are twin-bearing, and in this way this beautiful flock is increasing and multiplying continually. Every ewe becomes stronger and more beautiful as she feeds upon the green grass and drinks of the hidden springs.

As the ewes become stronger and bring forth twins, so each virgin in the bride of the Lamb, is made stronger and more beautiful by the teeth of faith which God has provided for her. There is not only abundant fruit in her own life, as she uses her faith and feeds upon the Bread from Heaven; but

through her faith, she is in travail for other souls, which are born into the Kingdom of Heaven through her ministry and prayers of faith. Thus the company of virgins, that make up the bride, goes on to the perfect number, and unto individual perfection.

The very fact that the flock is composed of "ewes," also points to the bride of Christ being made up of virgins, who are always spoken of in the feminine; a bride is always a woman. Although the bride is made up of redeemed and perfected men and women, they all bear the marks of submission and subjection to their unseen Head, which is expressed by the feminine. We can hardly despise the weaker sex, when all must come under this designation in their relation to the Lord; and we are told that in Him there is no male nor female, but all are spoken of as the "Lamb's wife."

4:3. **"Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy mouth is comely."** The bride's lips are like a delicate thread of scarlet showing forth perfect health. It is instructive and interesting to notice the perfect symbolism of the figures that the Holy Spirit uses throughout the Scriptures. Leprosy is always the symbol of sin; with the leper, there is no feature that is so disfigured as the lips, which become thick, white, and scurfy. At all times must the leper keep his mouth covered; and as soon as he hears the approach of footsteps, he must cry: "Unclean! Unclean!" The leper was looked upon as unclean and dangerous, and was isolated from among his people lest they too might contract this dread disease.

Not only are the lips of the sinners unclean, not only do their lips bear the signs of sin and uncleanness, but the lips of those who are called by the Name of Christ, often lack the pure, holy setting aside for the service of the Lord, which should ever be upon them. Some one has said that we should take heed to our words, in that God has graciously provided a white fence to hold in the tongue, and doors to keep closed

and locked. "Set a watch, O God, before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips" (Ps. 141:3).

The bride's lips being described as a thread of scarlet, is a symbol of the blood, which must ever be over the door of our lives and upon the door of our lips, so that not a word shall come forth that is not acceptable to God. "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer each one;" every word spoken, edifying and building up those around us; all coming from God and being to His glory so that He can own and use them.

"Let no corrupt (rotten) speech proceed out of your mouth, but such as is good for edifying as the need may be, that it may give grace to them that hear." The word translated "corrupt" is literally "worthless;" but this is taken from a word which means "to putrify." Hence, the final condition of worthless words is described in the original word; namely, "putrid." They are words that have no salt in them, though they may have seemed harmless when spoken. Because they were not with grace and well seasoned with salt, in the end they became putrid and ill-smelling.

We little realize how careless words, when repeated, can be misunderstood and perverted. Truly, it is dangerous to speak excepting in the Spirit; for though God takes care of all *He* causes us to speak, He will not protect and care for that which *we* speak. It is not only that the words should be with grace and seasoned with salt, they must be spoken at the right time; they must be unto edification as the need may be.

When unworthy, worthless, idle words come forth, if we had spiritual vision, we would see upon each other's lips the sign of leprosy more or less marked. But the lips of the bride shall not have the least appearance of leprosy upon them. They shall not be thick and white; they shall be like a thread of scarlet which shows forth the blood of cleansing and the color of health. Her speech shall be beautiful. Such treasures

will Jesus put within her heart, and so wonderfully will the Holy Spirit bring forth the words from the fullness within, that all who come in touch with her and hear the words of grace and wisdom that she speaks, will be edified thereby.

We are told that, "The heart of the righteous studieth to answer." If, before we answered, our hearts studied and were lifted up to our precious Lord as to what we should say; if we weighed and examined every answer before we spoke, how many times we would keep silent when we speak unadvisedly. If our hearts prayerfully studied to see whether every answer was from God or from ourselves; whether it could come through our lips and neither mar their scarlet beauty, nor leave a trace of leprosy behind, how many words would be cut off, and how many would be changed.

How wonderful would it be to ourselves and to those about us if God touched our lips with a live coal from His own altar, and forever made our words pure. How beautiful would we appear before our Beloved if He could always behold upon our lips the cleansing of His blood. It is only as our hearts are abandoned in love to Him, and He pours into them the treasures of His wisdom and grace, that we can bring forth this beautiful speech. "For out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh."

In James, we are told that we must be "quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to wrath." But many, even of the children of God, are quick to speak and teach others; quick to strive and defend themselves, even when they are in the wrong; quick to wrath or irritability. They are slow only when it comes to being taught and hearing instruction (Prov. 1:7).

There is much more in the words of our mouths than we have ever apprehended. "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." We must take heed that the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts are acceptable in the sight of our Beloved, and do not bring reproach upon His Name.

It is when the blood of the Lamb has been applied to the heart, out of which are the issues of life, that the lips and speech are also cleansed. There is no fear of any unclean, unwise or foolish words coming out of a heart thus cleansed, and from lips that ever bear the restraining power and cleansing of the blood upon them. As the Blood of Jesus Christ is trusted step by step, the lips become scarlet, delicate, and to the glory of God; they are not defiled by unworthy speech. It is then, that the speech of the bride is well seasoned, and is always in season.

"Thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate behind thy veil." In Scripture, the temples, or forehead, are always spoken of as the seat of boldness or modesty. This comparison to a piece of pomegranate, refers to the red and white center of the fruit after it is cut; the seeds of which, when broken, give forth a red fluid, which is a symbol of the blood; the pulp shows red mixed with white. It is a precious emblem of the modesty of the bride tingeing or covering her spotlessness, which is represented by the white.

As the red tinged seeds of the pomegranate lie hidden within the fruit, so with the bride of the Lamb; it is the hidden man of the heart that is clothed with the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of her Lord of great price. The work must begin within, and go on until she is adorned with all shame-facedness and modesty, with all humility. As the red of the pomegranate is hidden away inside the rind of the fruit, so must our union with the Lord in His death, work within before it can appear without. It is as we die to pride and self in the heart, that the incorruptible, hidden apparel is put on. As we put on Christ within, His humility will appear without; but it always appears before the face of God before it is seen by man.

The pure, blushing face of the bride is rendered more beautiful by being shaded and protected by the locks of her

separation unto God. It is through this deep separation and fidelity to her Beloved, that she is clothed within with the incorruptible apparel, which is so rare and beautiful in the eyes of the Bridegroom. She does not flaunt her beauty abroad to be admired by His enemies; she does not try to please the world, neither is she gratified with the admiration and praises of those who hate her Beloved. The colors, which are a sign of her modesty and chastity, have their source within, and are not the artificial counterfeit that is put on without, which may deceive man, but can never deceive God.

Only submission to God and living union with Jesus Christ, can bring real humility. Though a man is timid and conscious of his lack before his fellow men, as soon as any one speaks to him about God and his soul's salvation, he becomes resentful and full of rebellion. Sinners are always stiff-necked and insolent toward God.

The humility here described is the holy fear and reverence toward God, that every child of His should have. It is the reverence that causes him to walk softly before the Lord in holy submission and subjection, which befits the bride of Christ.

CHAPTER XXI

THE VALOR, FAITH AND LOVE OF THE BRIDE. 4:4, 5.

4:4. **"Thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armory, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all the shields of the mighty men."** The bride's neck is like a war tower, or fortress, that lifts its head high above all the region around it and keeps watch of every approach from the enemy's country. It is hung with armor, and with trophies of victories won.

The bride is adorned with the shamefacedness, which is so beautiful in a bride; her neck is no longer bowed down with the yoke of bondage, which she wore when she tended the vineyard of the world and sin. Christ has broken the bars of her yoke that she may walk upright; He has taken away the mark of slavery, and the bondage of the law; He has set her free. She is called to freedom, and the upright neck of the bride shows that she is standing fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has set her free. She does not use this precious liberty as an occasion to the flesh, but through love, each virgin in the bride is servant to the others. Every yoke that the world and man have laid upon her neck, has been broken off by the work of her Lord upon the Cross of Calvary. She is no longer bound by the fetters of sin and the law, by the fear of man.

The bride, crowned with humility and reverence toward God, walks softly and with holy fear before her Lord. She abides at the feet of Jesus, realizing her nothingness apart from Him; but when she faces the enemy or the world, she

is clothed with holy boldness and courage in her Beloved. Thus she moves on with holy fear and submission toward God, but fearless and victorious toward all her foes, whether the world, the flesh, or the devil. Her neck is like those defensive towers that are hung with armor. It is not proud nor wanton, neither is it stiff-necked and rebellious, but it is upright, white, stately and beautiful.

Have we ever grasped the fact, that every man is the slave of something or some one? Sinners are bond slaves to the devil and to sin; and their blindness is so great, that they do not know they are bond slaves, body, soul and spirit, to the world and to its prince, who is Satan. They believe that they are free, especially those who do not yield to outbreaking sins. But all who are not saved, are just as much bond slaves to the world and to Satan, as those who show their slavery and bondage more evidently. All of us have been slaves in this way, bound with all kinds of fetters of sin and worldliness, whether seen or unseen.

When God calls a sinner to repent and turn to Him, the sinner thinks that, if he obeys, he will be bound and lose his liberty. He does not know that he has been set to keep the vineyards of the world, and that his neck is bent and deformed under the yoke of the world and sin. He does not know that the sun of the world has scorched his neck, and that it is black and swarthy because of this bondage and slavery which he is under. He thinks that he is free, but he is a slave and bound down. Sinners think they have liberty and are rich, but they are poor and blind, naked and bound.

It is not only the sinner who is bound, but many of God's children are bound by one thing or another. Some are bound by trying to keep some part of the Jewish law; others are bent down with fear and a man-pleasing spirit; others are bound by their own flesh or that of others, which they are serving as real bond slaves. Others are held by the natural and

the habits of years, which, while they are not the direct operations of the fallen nature that hates God, are not divine. They are living and walking like men instead of living and walking like the sons of God. Whenever any of these different things come up to be settled, the question arises: "Whom shall I serve, my flesh or God, a man-fearing spirit or God? Whom shall I please, man or God, myself or God?"

There is a precious relation to the Lord, which is a joy to the consecrated heart; and this was exulted in so many times by Paul. He rejoiced in calling himself the "bondslave of the Lord." He gloried in being the slave of Christ, as though this were a compensation to him for the years in which he was an enemy of his Lord and a slave to the law and to the traditions of the elders. He longed to be the love slave of his Lord more completely than he had ever been under bondage to his enemies.

We are to present our members as instruments of righteousness to God, just as we were wont to present them as servants to uncleanness and to iniquity. If we were as faithful in thus presenting our members unto God for Him to use, as we have been in presenting them unto sin and Satan to be used, we should go on with leaps and bounds where we have been scarcely moving. It is a continual choosing, for there is a continual parting of the ways. It begins with the choice between God and Satan, between righteousness and sin, between Heaven and this world. The first choice is when, as sinners, the Holy Spirit points our vision to Jesus Christ and tells us He died for us that we might be delivered from all our enemies.

If we yield to the Spirit's dealing and let Jesus Christ break every fetter from our necks, if we choose in all things to serve Him and Him alone, He takes away the yokes that have weighed down our necks, and in their place He throws over us His yoke of love. As we have tended the vineyard of the world and sin, so would God have us tend the vineyards

of our own souls; He would also have us work in His vineyard, when we are where He can trust us, and calls us to do so. When He has brought us to the place where we are tending our own vineyards and are partaking of the fruit, He will let us help others and teach them to tend the vineyards of their souls.

The armor with which the bride is equipped, and through which she gets victory, is described in Eph. 6: 10-18. There are two weapons of warfare mentioned, these are the "Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God," and "All prayer and supplication." We must ever have the Word of God hanging about our necks, not only covering our hearts, but hidden away therein, so that we can use it against the enemy whenever he appears.

"Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against Thee." "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." God's Word hacks and hews, cuts down and brings to naught man's ideas and theories in a marvelous way. Let us not be concerned as to what man thinks and says, but let us concern ourselves with what God thinks, and what His Word declares about all things. And let us take heed that His Word is not wrested to fit man's doctrines and philosophy, but is rightly divided as the Spirit leads.

One reason so many of God's people have refused the Truth and further light when it appeared, is because they could not rightly divide the Word of Truth. One reason that God's children have gone off into error, is because the sword is not hanging in their armory; or if it is, they are not skillful in using it and rightly dividing the Word of Truth. Let the Holy Spirit plant in your heart the eternal fact, that all our opinions and all we can say, will never defeat the enemy nor convince man. Only when you bring the Word of God, with: "Thus saith the Lord," are all mouths shut, even though those who hear may hate you and go on in their error.

We must have this armory covered with the promises of God, and what God says about salvation, about the real gospel of Jesus Christ and our identification with Him in His death and resurrection. We must hang about our necks what God's Word says about the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, and about the healing of the body through faith in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. We must know His Word about separation unto Him, about immersion in water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Take all God's truths and hang them up in that armory of David. When you want to use them, God will point out the weapon you need; and as you take the one He points out, the enemy will flee. The devil may hate you afterward, but God will love you. Let us never forget that God hates a coward.

Not only this, but we are told that all the shields of the mighty men are hanging in this tower. This can be interpreted in two ways. First, the shields and weapons that the Christian uses, are hanging there. Second, the shields and weapons that have been taken from the enemy, are there. Do you know that when you get victory over the devil, you hang up in your armory a trophy of war and victory? God would not have just one or two hanging there, He has given us such a large armory, that we can hang up all the promises that He has given us, and we can bring up all the victories with the arms that we have taken from the enemy.

The Indian brave believes that he receives the prowess and courage of every warrior whom he kills. This is only a tradition with the Indians, but it is always true in Christian warfare. If the devil defeats us, he has much more strength over us for the next battle, and we are much weaker. But if, through faith in our union with Jesus Christ, we stand and get victory over him, we are much stronger and he is much weaker for the next battle. It is by the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, that we overcome the enemy. As

we use the weapons which we have carefully hung about our necks, we go from victory to victory, and hang up the trophies we take in battle until the walls of the armory are adorned with the weapons and shields that we use, and the weapons and shields that we have captured from the enemy.

If we cannot come out victoriously over ourselves and over the little temptations here, how can the Lord trust us to reign with Him? What kind of warriors would we make? How much could He depend upon us? He will give us the place for which we are prepared and qualified; we must set our faces to be overcomers if we are to sit with Him upon His throne and reign with Him. We must know how to use the armor which He has provided, "The Word of God," and "All-prayer."

As we listen to the voice of God and hear instruction, His words become a chaplet of grace unto our heads and chains about our necks (Prov. 1:9). As we obey Him and keep His commandments, as we bind them continually upon our hearts and tie them about our necks (Prov. 6:20, 21), we find that they are life unto our souls and grace to our necks.

It is as the bride comes to God with holy boldness, holding fast the beginning of her confidence firm unto the end, that she captures the enemy's arms and strength to add to this armory. It is as she is free from any touch or power of the enemy, that she has all power over him through faith in Jesus Christ, and the skillful use of the sword of the Spirit.

Many of God's children do not realize that they are in a war, and are expected to be valiant soldiers of the Cross of Jesus Christ. Because their enemy is not visible, because their battles many times go on within, and are against their own nature and flesh, they are deceived into thinking that there is no battle. But if the Word of God is adorning and protecting their necks, they will be on the alert and shall never be defeated.

4:5. **"Thy two breasts are like two fawns that are twins of a roe, which feed among the lilies."** The breasts of the bride and the breastplate of the Christian are the same. This is fully brought forth by other Scripture, especially in 1 Thess 5:8, where we are commanded to put on the breastplate of faith and love. We know that the just lives by faith, and it is impossible to receive anything from God excepting by faith. We cannot work up, nor pump up faith; neither can we manufacture it. If the bride of Christ is going to be perfected according to this symbolism, which compares her to the perfectly developed woman, she must have perfect breasts, or perfect faith and love.

The double breastplate of the Christian is symbolized by the breastplate of Judgment which the Jewish high priest wore, and upon which he bore the names of the tribes of Israel before the Lord. This breastplate was double, and was made somewhat after the style of a pocket. In it were the Urim and Thummim, or the Lights and Perfections, through which the priests inquired of Jehovah and received guidance and direction. In 1 Thess. 5:8, the breastplate of the Christian is described as double; namely, "Faith and Love." And here in the Song of Solomon, it is again described as double, or as "twin fawns."

It is only through this double breastplate, that we communicate with God and find out His will. We have the unseen mysteries, the invisible lights and perfections in this Christian breastplate; and when we have it on, we can always hear from God and know His will. In Ephesians, it is called the breastplate of righteousness, which describes it according to that which it brings to us when the faith and love are perfectly working.

The meaning of the breasts of the bride is beautifully set forth in Eph. 3:14-19. Paul prays that the Ephesians may be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inward

man; that Christ may dwell in their hearts *through faith*. Here is one part of this precious breastplate with which God would have us furnished. The purpose of this is that they may be rooted and grounded *in love*. Here is the other part of the breastplate. The purpose of putting on this double breastplate is that they may apprehend what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and know *the love* of Christ which passeth knowledge and be filled unto all the fullness of God.

It is only when the bride's breasts of faith and love are perfected and fully developed, that she is in a place where she can apprehend the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of Christ. In the natural, she could not understand His great love, for it is described as passing knowledge. It is through this breastplate, she is filled unto all the fullness of God.

In Gal. 5:7, we are told that neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith working through love. In this Scripture also, the setting forth of the symbolism found in the verse in Song of Solomon, is very plain. The breasts are described, not only as being like two fawns, but as "twins of a roe." Both born at the same time, both growing at the same time, and inseparable. Neither is found without the other, nor would either be of any use without the other, for faith only works by love; in order to have faith we must have love, and if we have love, faith must work. We cannot get away from the plain statement of God's Word as brought out by the different passages.

It is as impossible for the bride of Christ, or any virgin who is among this number, to have faith or love alone, as it is impossible for a perfectly formed and developed woman to have but one breast. Without both, there is deformity. In the natural, this might happen through some accident or infirmity, but it could not be the work of nature; neither could it

be a work of grace in the spiritual. Either both of the breasts grow and are developed, or neither grows.

Why is it that we do not have more faith? Because we have not more love. This is not love to mankind, but love toward God. Divine love to mankind depends upon our love to God, for as we love Him whom we have not seen, we shall also love our brother whom we have seen.

Along these lines we are undeveloped. How will it be in the day that the Bridegroom comes, and we shall be asked for (ch. 8:8)? He will never have a bride who is not developed, whose faith and love are not perfected until she can do exploits and overcome. He has provided that we may be perfectly filled out; and He gives us hard things to practice upon, that through the hard things, we may be driven to seek Him. Through earnestly seeking Him, we learn to love and believe Him more day by day. Through seeking Him, we attain unto the love that joyfully loses all things for Christ's sake, and the faith that works by love unto removing mountains.

According to the Word of God, we see that only those who have on the breastplate of faith and love can become overcomers. "This is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4). According to the Scripture just quoted, none can become an overcomer without this faith; and faith only works when there is love. So we see that the bride of the Lamb must have perfectly developed breasts that are as twin fawns.

They are only found feeding among the lilies, which, throughout this book, are a symbol of the virgins of the bride (ch. 2:2, 16; 6:2, 3). All who are in the bride, will have perfectly developed faith and love, which will feed in the pasture of the Great Shepherd. They draw down the life of Christ and feed upon the hidden manna; and through faith and love, the life of the Beloved is manifested upon them.

The lilies grow in the richest valleys, and only among the

lilies is found the perfect working of faith and love both toward God and the redeemed of the Lord. They nourish and strengthen each other, they go in company together, they feed together among the lilies; not upon the lilies.

It is through the breasts of the Church of Christ, that sustenance and nourishment go out to fainting babes in the Lord, and souls are born into the Kingdom. Only love and faith toward Jesus Christ constrain His servants to lay down their lives for the gospel's sake. Only faith and love toward Jesus Christ uphold the under-shepherds and workers in the vineyard, as they travail in soul until sinners are saved for the Master. Only faith and love toward Jesus Christ can make all things but dross compared to the knowledge of Christ. Only intense faith and love can plant in the heart, the desire to have fellowship in Christ's sufferings and to be conformed to His death. Faith and love alone could call hunger, thirst, shipwrecks, persecutions, stoning and stripes, "these light afflictions."

The breasts of the Colossian church had reached such perfection, that Paul in Col. 1:4, writes that he has heard of their faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which they had toward all the saints. The faith which we have in the Lord always works through love to Him, and this love flows out to those whom He has redeemed through His own precious blood.

Paul writes to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 1:3) that he remembers their work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope in the Lord Jesus Christ. Here is an example of faith working through love, and of both, as twin fawns, feeding among the lilies, even the Thessalonian Christians.

If we have on this supernatural breastplate, we shall be clothed with the robe of righteousness, which Christ died that we might wear; and without which, none shall go in to the marriage supper of the Lamb. It is through faith working by love, that we put on this wedding garment. It is through

faith working by love, that we become more than conquerors through Him who loved us. How our hearts should go out to God, that He will perfect into symmetrical beauty and fullness the faith and love, which must adorn us if we would be the bride of His Son.

This is a description of the bride, as made up of the company of overcomers; but every virgin in this company must partake of the beauties here described. The Holy Temple, which God is building for Himself out of living stones, will be beautiful and perfect for God to dwell in. But its perfection and beauty will be because of the perfection and beauty of each stone. Every stone must be shaped, molded and indwelt by God.

The bride of the Lamb will be perfect and beautiful because each virgin of this company has been prepared and conformed to the will of God, and to the image of Jesus Christ. Each virgin will be fair with beautiful, uncut locks of separation protecting eyes that are as doves. She will have the taking faith that feeds upon the Word, and her lips will be holy, consecrated, ever covered with the blood of Jesus. Her speech will be beautiful before God and edifying to man. She will be adorned with divine humility in the hidden man of the heart, being humble before her Lord, but bold and fearless before the enemy. Her faith and love will be perfectly developed, going out to her Beloved, and feeding in His pastures.

CHAPTER XXII

THE CRUCIFIXION FORETOLD. FAREWELL WORDS OF THE BRIDEGROOM. 4:6, 7.

4:6. **"Until the day break and the shadows flee away, I will get Me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense."** Historically, this portrays the last hours that the Lord passed with the disciples before He instituted the betrothal supper, and just before the crucifixion.

Already the lengthening shadows of approaching night were beginning to fall across the golden day of the Bridegroom's presence upon earth. To Christ, these shadows took the form of a rugged cross outside the city walls, and from the beginning, He had discerned and walked under this cross-like shadow.

The only difference between night and day is caused by the light and warmth of the sun that dispels the darkness; and it is the presence of the Sun of Righteousness, who is the Light of the world, that dispels the darkness of spiritual night. The only day that appears in the Song of Solomon is set forth in the third Canticle, throughout which, the Bridegroom is portrayed as being with the bride. This day shines forth, glorious and unclouded because of the presence of Him who is the true Shekinah of God, and the effulgence of His glory. So short was this day of Christ's presence on earth, the only day the world has ever known! Only a few brief years, preceded by a night of thousands of years; and followed by a night of two thousand years' absence, which is not yet ended.

Darkness still reigns upon the earth, neither will it be dis-

pelled until Christ returns again, then shall another day begin and there shall be no more night. Already the anointed eye discerns the signs of Eternal Day appearing upon the horizon, and our hearts are filled with yearning and rejoicing. It is not toward a day of a few years that we are looking and hasting, but we are looking and hasting toward the Eternal Day, when we shall forever be with the Lord.

Over and over during the last months of His life did our Lord tell the disciples that He must suffer and die. Most tenderly did He warn them that the hour of His departure was approaching; but how unconscious they were that the sun had commenced to go down and the night of His absence was closing in upon them. Although Jesus knew that His hour had come, none of His disciples discerned the shadows that were already gathering around them.

Jesus saw that the disciples did not discern that the hour was at hand when they would be left alone. He would not have His beloved disciples unprepared, and He gently pointed out to them the deepening shadows, and intimated that the bride would not always have the Bridegroom with her; but they could not understand. They could not take in the import of His words, which so plainly set forth His death and warned them that the time was at hand. Notwithstanding all He said to them concerning His sufferings and death, His words were forgotten. Even as they traveled to Jerusalem, where the ignominy and suffering of the cross awaited Him, and where the night of His absence awaited them, they strove as to who should be the greatest in His kingdom, which they thought He was about to set up.

How plain were His words if their understanding had not been darkened, and if their eyes had not been blinded by their preconceived ideas. If they had taken in His sayings, they would have been prepared for the end that was so close upon Him and upon them; but they were blind and could see no signs of gathering shadows.

For over three years did Jesus Christ walk with His disciples, teaching and talking with them. From time to time, He told them: "The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and the chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up." "But they did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him what it meant." We wonder at the dullness of the disciples, and we cannot understand why they could not take in His words and be prepared for His death.

Child of God, is it any different with you and me? For years has the truth of the Second Coming of Christ been going forth. Especially during the last decade have we seen the signs of His appearing, increasing upon the face of the earth; and we have heard the voice of the Spirit, warning us most insistently that Christ's Coming draweth nigh. But many who preach and teach it, are living as though it were not so.

It is with us as with the disciples. They could not see the shadows of His death and departure gathering about them. The sun had been going down some time, but they knew it not. Most of them thought it was the dawn of His reign on earth, instead of the twilight preceding the night of His absence. Though the Spirit of God has been warning God's people for years, the same dullness is on them today. Through the darkness of the night, which is growing more dense, rays of the dawn can be perceived by the anointed eye; but only a few understand these signs.

Let us take heed lest we, too, are unable to discern the signs of the Coming of the Lord. Let us fear lest the same dullness and blindness happen to us concerning His Second Coming, as were upon the disciples concerning His death; and He comes and finds us unprepared in spite of the warnings and signs, which are increasing as the days go by.

"Simon Peter saith unto Him, Lord, whither goest Thou? Jesus answered, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now;

but thou shalt follow afterwards. Peter saith unto Him, Lord, why cannot I follow Thee even now?" With what love did the Lord tell the disciples that they could not go with Him; with what tender assurances does He encourage them that they shall follow Him afterwards though they cannot go with Him. The Heavenly Solomon has not yet prepared the place for His bride, He must go to His Father's house and make ready for the marriage, then He will come again and receive her unto Himself, that where He is, there she may be also. Not only must He make ready for her, but she must be made ready for Him.

Christ's precious farewell discourse was spoken not only to those few disciples, but to all His disciples down through the ages, that have followed Him all the way. These, too, must be brought in that His Father's house may be full. As yet, He has only betrothed the bride unto Himself; but the day for the marriage of the Lamb is approaching, and as the bride goes in with the Bridegroom to the marriage supper, all the prayers and longings of her heart will be fulfilled.

With His own blood, He has provided a wedding garment for His bride; He has bought jewels to adorn her face and neck; He has a crown laid up for her to wear on the wedding day. He has a throne, upon which she shall sit and reign with Him. If she would wear the crown and sit upon the throne, she must have on the wedding garment and the jewels; her beauty of form and feature must be perfected. She cannot come up with shorn hair and blinded eyes, her neck bowed down with yokes; she cannot come up deformed or unformed, without the wedding garment, and expect to wear the crown and sit on the throne.

It is through our identification with Him, that we make ready for the marriage. When He died on "The Hill of Frankincense," we died in Him; as we daily partake in His death, the fragrance of our acceptability in the Beloved, begins

to go out before God. We died and were buried with Him, and we have been raised up to walk in newness of life. How it melts our hearts before God when we remember that He has put us in Jesus Christ, in the One who embraces all the perfume, and the preciousness, and the sweetness, in the universe.

"The Mountain of Myrrh" is a figure of the tomb in which the Lord lay until He rose from the dead. "The Hill of Frankincense" symbolizes the Cross of Calvary, where, through the Eternal Spirit, He offered Himself. "Myrrh" shows forth the preciousness, the fragrance, and the priceless value of Jesus Christ in His redemptive work upon the cross. "Frankincense" is an emblem of His perfect acceptability before God, and abandonment to do His will and glorify Him in all things. He came to do the will of God despite the suffering, and in the Garden of Gethsemane, He said: "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not My will but Thine be done."

The purest products of these precious perfumes are obtained by piercing the bark of the tree or shrub, and from these wounds flow the resinous gums that are so fragrant and costly. When Christ was pierced upon the cross, the myrrh and frankincense of His eternal work came forth. From five bleeding wounds flowed the fragrant, bitter myrrh that fills heaven and earth, and the frankincense of His acceptability unto God; together with the glory and praise that ascended to God through His redemptive work, accomplished at such a price.

As Christ hung and died upon "The Hill of Frankincense" (Calvary) and lay in "The Mountain of Myrrh" (the tomb), from five bleeding wounds arose His finished work, a Mountain of Spices, fragrant and eternal. All the spices on earth would fail to set forth a faint shadow of the perfume that Christ gathered while upon earth, and carried up with Him to the Father.

As He died upon the cross, the incense commenced to go up, and Heaven is filled with the fragrance of these spices and perfumes. Eternity will not suffice to reveal the mountains of myrrh, frankincense, and spices that rose with increasing perfume and incense from the Cross of Calvary, and from the tomb of our Lord.

On that lone hill outside the city walls, deserted by all, even by His Father, hung the One who was symbolized by the passover lamb, and by the continual burnt offering in the Jewish worship. In the tomb reposed the One, in whom was the source and fullness of all the spices and perfumes of Heaven and earth. It was He and His acceptability to God that were symbolized by the frankincense of the continual incense, which was offered before God. All the spices used in the Jewish Temple were but a poor emblem of His fragrance; and the holy anointing oil was but a poor symbol of the Holy Spirit who dwelt in Him in all fullness.

After His death, the first virgins of the bride, who had loved and followed Him on earth, brought one hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes to the tomb. With what grief did they take that precious body and wind about it the white linen cloths! With what untold tenderness did they lay it away in the bed of fragrant spices!

The anointings and spices that were offered Jesus in life and in death, symbolized the anointing of the Spirit; the preciousness of His atoning work; His eternal love toward sinful man; His abandonment to do God's will; the perfection of His graces and precious attributes. Though His disciples brought enough spices at first to embalm many bodies, they were not satisfied. Early in the morning of the first day of the week, while it was yet dark, the women brought more spices to embalm the body of Him whom they had loved and followed, and who had changed their whole lives.

There is no sweetness, no perfume, no preciousness out-

side of Him; only as we are in Him and put Him on, do we have any beauty upon us. If we would gather any Myrrh or Frankincense, we must go to the Mountain of Myrrh and the Hill of Frankincense.

Do you desire to offer before God the costly frankincense? Then must you go up to the Hill of Frankincense, the cross, and offer your body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service. Would you bring to your Beloved the fragrant myrrh and pour it out at His feet? Then must you take up your cross and so partake in the death of Christ, that your whole life is filled with His manifested attributes.

God would have us remember that the cross is a *Hill of Frankincense.* Not a small cruse, but an eternal hill of this costly perfume. How many times we go up to the cross as if it were mountains of grief and regret, of suffering and sighing, and not a Hill of Frankincense. How often when we take up our cross to go after Jesus, we follow Him, moaning and repining at every step.

Beloved, THE CROSS IS A HILL OF FRANKINCENSE, and all the fragrance of this precious hill is lost when we go up reluctantly and grudgingly. Our Beloved would have us give glory to God as we go up to the cross. He would have our only thought be to glorify Him, as we lose sight of the shame and suffering because of the joy that is set before us. Let us go up with joy unspeakable and full of glory, exulting that to us it has been granted to suffer and to follow in His footsteps. Let us go to the Hill of Frankincense that arose from the death of Christ, and gather precious perfume of incense as we partake in His death. Let us yield to every cross, that it may do its work upon us thoroughly. Let us jealously gather all the myrrh and frankincense that God has hidden away in each cross.

4:7. **"Thou art all fair, my love; and there is no spot**

in thee." The Bridegroom has been warning the bride that He must leave her and go to His Father, but He speaks to her most tenderly, assuring her of His love. He would not have her think that He is going away because of any fault of hers, nor because of any lack of love in His heart. "Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send Him unto you."

In the dark hours of His absence, He would have the bride remember the words that He has spoken, assuring her that it is for her sake alone, He must go up to Calvary and lie in the tomb. Only through His death could He redeem the church which He loved, and present it to Himself, glorious, without spot or wrinkle. There is much difference between a spot and a wrinkle. A spot is "a stain coming from defilement;" a wrinkle is "a fold, a drawing together." A wrinkle is a blemish, though there may be no defilement with it. A surface may be spotlessly white with no stain upon it, but if it is wrinkled, its beauty and usefulness are marred. The bride shall not have even a wrinkle. Our precious Lord is going to cleanse the bride in His own blood and make her whiter than snow. The hand of the Father will smooth out every wrinkle by the heat and pressure of His dealing hand, until the bride appears in all the glory and beauty of her Lord's comeliness.

Christ's love toward His disciples was tenderly manifested during those last days of His passion; and His parting words, as set forth in the Gospel of John, were a solace not only to His disciples, but also to you and me, and to every one whom He has bought with His own precious blood. If you compare His tender reassuring words, beginning with the thirteenth chapter of John, with the prophetic utterance given here in the Song of Solomon, you will see how preciously they blend together.

"Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense" (S. of Sol. 4:6). "Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3).

"Thou art all fair, my love, and there is no spot in thee" (S. of Sol. 4:7). · "Already ye are clean because of the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3). "While I was with them, I kept them in Thy name which Thou hast given Me: and I guarded them, and not one of them perished, save the son of perdition" (John 17:12). "Even as the Father loved Me, I also have loved you" (John 15:9). "Jesus having loved His own that were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (John 13:1).

The love of Christ, which went out so tenderly to those who walked and talked with Him when He was upon earth, is no less far-reaching and eternal to usward. It is this fathomless love of Christ that conquers; and His all-conquering, boundless love, is the banner that He has lifted over us. It is ever floating before the eyes of God the Father, showing that we have been purchased by the Blood of His Son.

O precious divine love, higher than the heavens, deeper than the abyss, broader than Eternity! O mighty love that reached down through eternal ages and brought Christ down from the bosom of the Father to die for us on the Cross of Calvary ("The Hill of Frankincense"); which brought Him to the tomb ("The Mountain of Myrrh"); which brought Him back to the right hand of God, as intercessor for us through His own finished work ("The Mountains of Spices").

This verse not only refers to His withdrawal from His disciples when He went to the cross, but He also leads us along

the same path. Sometimes when our communion is sweetest, and we are drawn close into His presence; when our souls are ravished with His love, and we see "the King in His beauty:" when we are confident we have entered into so intimate and close relation with Him that nothing can ever disturb it, our Beloved suddenly withdraws. Like Job, we go forward and He is not there; and backward, but we cannot perceive Him. On the left hand when He doth work, but we cannot behold Him; He hideth Himself on the right hand that we cannot see Him. He does this in tenderness and for our sakes, that we may not rejoice in the sweetness alone, nor because we have entered into a closer communion and relation with Him; but that we may rejoice in Him and in Him alone.

He would have us know that, whether seen or unseen, whether felt or not felt, our Lord is the same yesterday and today, yea and forever. His love never changes nor grows cold. "With Him is no variableness, neither shadow that is cast by turning" (Jas. 1:17).

How many times we are like Thomas, we cannot believe unless we see the print of the nails and put our finger into the print of the nails, and put our hand into the spear wound in His side. And sometimes when we have doubted, our Lord has gently reproached us for our unbelief. We could almost hear Him say to us as He said to Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger, and see My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and put it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing." God wants us in the place where we do not depend upon our feelings; where, though we do not behold Him, though we do not see Him, we shall "endure as beholding Him who is invisible." He wants us where we can trust Him through darkness and apparent separation, as unflinchingly as in light and communion; where we know that His banner, Love, is always floating over us, though it is so dark that we cannot see it.

There is no grace in delighting in the presence and favor of God when they are resting consciously and continually upon us; for this rejoicing comes from sight and feelings. But there is precious grace in that delight which is not dependent upon God's favors, nor upon our enjoyment of them; but which is wholly dependent and has its source in God's naked Word, and His faithfulness.

CHAPTER XXIII

BRIDE CALLED TO GREATER SEPARATION. LOVE OF BRIDEGROOM. 4:8-10.

4:8. **"Come with me from Lebanon, My bride, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Senir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards."** Lebanon was a border mountain between the enemy's country and the Promised Land, and it was never conquered by the Hebrews. It is symbolic of the spiritual borderland between the world and Heaven; between compromise and fidelity to God; between half-heartedness and abandonment to God. As has been said: "It is too high for earth and too low for Heaven." These border mountains were infested with wild beasts, which lurked in the hiding-places of the clefts and rocks, ready to spring out upon the unwary or belated traveler. They were filled with dangers from lions and leopards, from chasms and precipices.

The lion is the symbol of the enemy as a roaring, open foe, going about seeking whom he may devour; strong, courageous, but bitter and full of open hatred toward God and man. The leopard is the symbol of the enemy, as a subtle, fierce, swift foe, enraged against mankind. In Rev. 13:2, the leopard is used as an emblem of the Antichrist. It is in the borderlands, the enemy pushes the fiercest warfare that he may capture and destroy those who are escaping "from the corruption that is in the world by lust."

He never pursues and attacks those who are in the world and have no desire to escape; neither can he follow those who hasten beyond the borderlands and border mountains to the

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place of security, which God has prepared, and to which He is calling His people. It is against those who linger between the world and the Church of Christ, that the enemy as the lion and leopard, directs his efforts.

The enemy always attacks the weak Christian who is bewildered and distressed and does not know God's Word, and who is easily unsettled. Have you noticed that the enemy never comes and tries to unsettle you along the lines of Truth where you are firmly established, and the lines of Christian living where you have victory? If you examine the places in your life where you lack victory, and where you are the most beset by the enemy concerning the Truth of God, you will find you are still in the borderland and have not gone on in the knowledge of God and His Word. You have not gone over upon God's ground and, by faith, planted your feet there, with the determination to hold all you tread upon. As you do this, you will find the enemy has retreated from that place, and has begun an attack at some other point.

In the natural, mountains once crossed do not face us again; but spiritually, these mountains of decision, which lie between God's best and compromise, are continually facing us along every line. At every step and point of decision, the call of God to come away with Him, is as urgent as it was the first time He called us. Even after we leave the high peaks and ranges of the border mountains, it is surprising how many foothills there are before we are clear of the borderland; and we are not safe until we have left even the foothills. Many times the enemy makes sudden sallies and carries a belated traveler back to the highest peak of bewilderment and indecision.

The Bridegroom would not have His bride loiter in these mountains; He calls her to come with Him that she may possess that which He has bought for her. He has translated her out of darkness into His marvelous light, out of the kingdom

of darkness into the kingdom of light; and He would not have her lingering in the questionable region that separates light from darkness. He woos her to hasten in the race, by inviting her to look from these high passes and behold the land that has been prepared for her.

It is not enough to have visions of the things that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him." Visions are not possession; and though they may be from God, they are only given to encourage us to hasten our footsteps that we may enter in. It is not enough for us to leave the world and begin the journey; we must hasten on to the end and finish our course even to the last step.

How many who leave the world, are continually looking over their shoulders and desiring to go back. How many who start on the journey, settle down in these border mountains; and if they are not devoured by the enemy that lurks there, they eventually retrace their steps and are found in the world. How many have started in the race and have become weary, have fallen over some stone of stumbling, have become discouraged because the way was rough and steep. How many have been half-hearted and have not gone beyond these border mountains, where the dens of lions are and the treacherous leopard.

The mountain vision of a distant land of beauty and sunshine, does not feed nor warm the one who sees it. Moses did not go over into Canaan, though for forty years he bore the children of Israel as a nursing mother bears a child upon her bosom, and stood between God and His people as the mouthpiece of God. God took Moses up on the top of Mount Pisgah and let him view the land, but He told Moses that he could not go over and possess it. The sight was, no doubt, beautiful to this servant of God; and yet how was he profited by the milk and honey, which flowed in the Land that he beheld?

Though the vineyards were ever so green and fruitful, what joy could they bring to him who would never enjoy their fruits nor drink of their vintage? Though the pomegranates were large and luscious, though the olive trees were green and loaded with fruit, he would never eat of this perfect fruit nor be anointed with the pure, abundant oil. Though the sun shone brighter than he had ever seen it in Egypt, or during those forty years in the desert, where he was taught in God's school of solitude, how did it profit him? He would never be warmed by its gracious rays.

His only solace was, that he had been faithful in all the house of God as a servant. At last, this people, whom God had called him to lead out, had been brought to the border of the Promised Land and they were to go in; but he could not go in because they had provoked him to presumption. Thus Moses looked down from the border mountain and beheld Canaan, the earthly Promised Land and Garden of the Lord, which God gave to the Jews.

There were some among the disciples, who were privileged to behold the glory of the heavenly Garden of God, and the glorious One who was Lord of it. Shortly before Jesus accomplished His decease, He took Peter, James and John up into a mountain apart from the others: "And He was transfigured before them; and His garments became glistering, exceeding white; so as no fuller on earth can whiten them." Peter, in speaking of this ineffable experience said: "We were eye witnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there was borne such a voice to Him by the Majestic Glory, This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: and this voice we ourselves heard borne out of Heaven, when we were with Him in the holy mount."

Though Peter, James and John beheld the glory of their Lord and heard the voice of God the Father witnessing to

Him, they could not go with Him at this time. Before they they could go and be forever with their Lord, they had a course to run, they had a ministry to fulfill, they had a fight to fight; they had the faith, which their Lord was about to commit to them, to keep even unto death. Only when they had done these things, could they enter into this glory, which they beheld in a measure upon the Mount of Transfiguration.

So it is with us. How beautiful is that land of far distances! Our souls are ravished by the revelations of our high calling, which we see while upon this high elevation. But we must come down and hasten over the path that leads to the possession of all we have seen, and all that God has offered us. There is no working of the enemy so treacherous, as the working of deception that would make us mistake for possession, the greater revelations God gives of Christ's beauty and our high privileges in Him.

Truly, this is the enemy as a treacherous leopard, deceiving the unwary soul. If the deception is not perceived in time, that soul becomes puffed up and full of self-satisfaction, which is fatal to receiving that which has been revealed. Better would it be not to have any visions or revelations, than to mistake them for land possessed; for those who steadily obey the Lord and follow Him without such experiences, will reach the goal; while the others may not.

It is to the Hill of Frankincense, He would have us hasten that we may partake with Him in His death; thus, the perfume of the cross embraced, will ascend to the Father from our lives. It is to these mountains of Frankincense and Myrrh, that our Lord would have us hasten our footsteps, not lingering in the border mountains, which are infested by the fierce, treacherous enemy, the wild beasts, who will tear and devour us and prevent us entering into the goodly land.

How the Lord woos His followers to come after Him. From those high border places, over which we must go to

come into the land, He lets us look upon His vineyard, which is represented in this book, both as a garden and as a vineyard. He lets us overlook the high terraces of the Garden of the Lord, and many times, we catch glimpses of the Garden of Heaven and of the lights from the City of our God.

4:9. **"Thou hast ravished My heart, My sister, bride; thou hast ravished My heart with one look from thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck."** Who can apprehend the love and solicitude that filled the heart of Jesus Christ during those last days of His life upon earth; and went out to those who had followed and loved Him, and whom He had chosen as His disciples.

How tender were the words of love and comfort that He spoke to those who had walked with Him, who had loved and believed on Him, and who would soon be bereft of His presence. Though they were so dull, though they were as children in their understanding of Him and of His words, they were dear to His heart. He knew that He, the Chief Shepherd, would soon be smitten; and His love and compassion seemed to increase and envelop them, as He looked forward and saw them scattered as sheep without a shepherd.

He foresaw their distress when the soldiers came and dragged Him from them, when they saw Him standing in the judgment hall, despised and condemned. He foresaw the suffering in their loving hearts as they beheld Him scourged and spit upon, as they followed Him when He went outside the city bearing His own cross. He foresaw their grief and perplexity as they beheld Him nailed to the cross, as they stood and watched Him hanging there. Pierced! Dying! Dead! Him who they had hoped would redeem Israel!

But He also knew that which they knew not. Though their weeping and sorrow would "tarry for the night," their joy would come in the morning. With the dawning of the day of grace, their joy would be made full as they beheld Him

risen from the dead, and as they again stood and watched Him, not dying, but ascending to the Father. And He knew that when the day of grace merged into the glorious Eternal Day of His Kingdom, they would rejoice and praise Him throughout eternal ages because He left them and went up to the "Hill of Frankincense." They would rejoice that His body not only reposed in the "Mountain of Myrrh," but that He rose up from that mountain of fragrance to the "Mountain of Spices."

During those moments of agony upon the cross, God ordained that one lily should be gathered as a firstfruit of those eternal blossoms, which would bloom forever on the terraces of Heaven. As the Spirit of God moved upon the heart of one of the thieves, he turned his eyes upon the dying Lord. Through the dealing of God and the approach of death, his vision became clearer than that of the priests; and he saw in the Man, hanging between him and his fellow thief, the Messiah, the Son of God. He said: "Jesus, remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom. And He said unto him, verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."

If the sinner gives one look at the uplifted Son of God, he receives love and life more abundant. When the Jews in the wilderness looked at the brazen serpent, they were healed and lived; and the sin-sick soul, in order to be saved, needs to look but once to the Lamb of God that has borne away his sins. As the Holy Spirit points to Christ dying upon the Cross of Calvary, His voice comes to every soul, beseeching him to "look and live."

Not only does one look secure the love of Christ, but the glance of one of the virgins of the bride is precious to Him. By one glance of our eyes, by turning our eyes and hearts Heavenward in prayer and praise, we can hold our dear Lord until He envelops us with His love and presence. When we

come to Him in obedience and submission, in love, adoration, and humility, we can hold Him and draw down answers to prayer.

Behold Him, weary and worn, taking His way through Samaria because He knew that at the well of Jacob, a poor, despised, sinful woman would look and live. Many of the churches today that are called by His Name, will not have Him. As Religious Bodies, they have discredited God's Word through Higher Criticism, they have shut out Christ the Son of God; but behold Him standing outside the door, knocking, knocking, not at the door of the Religious Bodies, but at the heart of each individual. Hear His tender voice entreating them: "If *any man* hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me."

Precious Saviour! How oft have we heard Thee knocking at the doors of our hearts; not only when we were sinners, but even after we had tasted and knew that the Lord was good, and had proved Thine infinite love. How often have we heard Thy tender voice beseeching us to open to Thee that Thou mightest sup with us, that we might sit at Thy table and sup with Thee. How often have we chosen the flesh pots of our own desires, and the companionship of others; when, if we had hearkened and opened unto Thee, we might have sat with Thee at Thy table.

The love in Peter's heart held the Master captive. With what tender love did our dear Lord appear to Peter alone after His resurrection. He came to him because He knew Peter's heart was bleeding over his traitorous denial; and He knew Peter would be one of those who would be true unto death, following Him even to the cross. When He rose from the dead, He left a special message for Peter with the angels who guarded the tomb. "Go tell His disciples *and Peter,* He goeth before you into Galilee."

The love of Christ goes out, and His heart is ravished when

He beholds the neck of the bride adorned with even one of those beautiful attributes, which He died that she might put on. Only as we take up our cross daily and follow Him, only as we reckon on our identification with Him in His death, to the putting off of the flesh and everything that is unworthy, can our necks be ornamented with the jewels of His attributes.

This not only means His attributes, which the bride has put on (ch. 1:10), but it also refers to the weapons that He has given her, and which are described as hanging about her neck (ch. 4:4). The bride's great and only weapons are "The Word of God" which is called the sword of the Spirit, and "All prayer and supplication." It is when she brings to Him the promises from God's precious Word, through "All prayer and supplication," that her dear Lord is held and ravished by one chain of her neck. He could not say, nay, to Moses when he interceded for rebellious Israel. When Daniel lay before Him for over three weeks in earnest supplication, God sent him the answer under angelic guard. When Abraham talked with Him and interceded for Sodom, Jehovah granted all that he asked.

How dull we are when it comes to a realization of the love of Christ. We are like little children who watch the beautiful colors and dazzling lights in a priceless diamond, but know not its value. We have no conception of what it cost our Lord to purchase redemption for mankind; we know not His suffering. We shall never know the anguish that broke His heart as He hung on the cross, deserted by all who had claimed to love Him.

The nails pierced His hands, that He might put gifts into our hands. The thorns pierced His brow, that we might wear a crown. He hung there and died, that we might live with Him forever. He became sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Oh, that we might love Him more! that our love might be

more pure and unselfish! It seems that He demands so little from us in comparison with what He has given us. Even a little turning of our love toward Him, and His heart responds to us, and the warmth of His love sweeps over us like flaming billows. Even a little turning of our faces toward Him with determination to go on into all He has bought for us, and He hastens to meet us. How His heart is ravished by one glance of our eye, by the turning of our hearts and lives, our aims, purposes and desires Christward.

Is it not strange that He loves us, when we are so unlovable and many times find it difficult to love one another? Is it not strange He trusts us, when so many times we have proven untrustworthy? How He longs for our love to go out to Him and be for Him alone, and at the best, how puny and unstable our love for our Lord is.

4:10. **"How fair is thy love, My sister, bride; how much better is thy love than wine."** The expression of the Bridegroom in describing the love of the bride, is very peculiar. He says, "How *fair* is thy love." Throughout this book the word translated "fair," while it means "beautiful," has a first meaning, which is "bright." And the word that is here translated "love," is not the emotion, love, in the abstract; it is the outgoing of the affections, those tokens that come from love. "Caresses and tokens of love." "How bright and beautiful are thy tokens of love, thy caresses." The thought is implied, that the tokens of our love toward Christ, the pouring out of our heart's affection at His feet, are changed into bright, costly jewels, beautiful and fair before His face.

No words can express how bright and beautiful in the eyes of Christ, are all the expressions and tokens of love, which a devoted heart offers to Him. The praise and gratitude from the truly consecrated heart, the loss of friends and reputation for His dear sake, the persecution that comes for His Name's sake and because of devoted love and loyalty, are better than all good to Him who has suffered such pain for us.

It was that He might redeem the bride and have her love for Himself alone that He poured out His blood. He bought her with all she is, and has a right to all the love that she can give. He paid a great price for her, even His own precious blood, and He paid this great price because He loved her with an everlasting love. The least she can do is to pour out her love and devotion at His feet, to give Him every token of her fidelity that a redeemed soul can give.

"And the fragrance of thine oils than all manner of spices." Not only is her love better to Him than all earthly good, not only did He count her love worth the death He suffered and the shedding of His blood, but the fragrance of her oils is better than all manner of spices. In the third verse of the first chapter, the bride rejoices in the goodly fragrance of *His oils;* and here the Bridegroom rejoices in the fragrance of *her oils,* which, to Him, is much better than all manner of spices. The fruits of the Spirit, and the fragrance of the Christ-life, are beginning to appear and are being perfected in her life.

There is a double meaning in this fragrance in the oils of the bride. From the time the wise men came from the east with their offerings of gold, frankincense and myrrh, and laid them at the feet of the babe in the manger, to the day that Joseph of Arimathæa went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Christ, it was always the followers of Christ who brought to Him spices and aromatic gums, or anointed Him. We read nowhere of Jesus bringing to any one gifts of spices and aromatic perfumes, neither did He anoint any one before His death.

He gave gifts unto men and wrought miracles; He healed the sick, raised the dead, and cast out demons; but in life and in death, He alone received oil, spices, spikenard, frankincense and myrrh, "with all powders of the merchant," which were brought to Him by His faithful and loving followers. These

anointings and offerings of perfumes and spices by His followers seem to have been most precious to His heart. All of these precious perfumes were emblems of the praise and adoration which were due Him, and Him alone; of the fragrance that was resident in Him.

The anointing oil is a symbol of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and had the significance that it was He who baptized in the Holy Spirit. "He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear. He shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire."

The Jewish Temple and temple worship were but shadows, and the substance that cast these shadows was Jesus Christ and His work upon the Cross of Calvary. The holy anointing oil and anointings were but a shadow of the real anointing, which Christ alone does; namely, the baptism in the Holy Spirit. It was not until Jesus had died and was glorified, that He bestowed this heavenly anointing of the Holy Spirit upon those who were redeemed.

There are many of God's children in these days, who either ignore the baptism in the Holy Spirit and His office, or have erroneous ideas as to what this experience is and the necessity of receiving it. This is not the place to go into the matter, but suffice to say, that in these days, as in the apostolic days, there is a real baptism in the Holy Spirit. It is received in like manner as it was received at Pentecost, and by the saints of the early churches.

Some persons have a vague idea that the Spirit is an influence, and others believe that He is a blessing; both of which theories are most misleading and unscriptural. The Holy Spirit is not an influence, neither is the baptism in the Spirit a mere blessing, although He does influence God's children, and He does bring to us blessings. He is a real Person, even the third Person of the Trinity. He comes into these bodies and dwells, and He speaks through us for Himself when He

comes in. "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall bear witness of me: and ye also bear witness" (Jno. 15:26, 27). Thus we see that the Comforter bearing witness, is apart from, and altogether different from the followers of Christ testifying and bearing witness.

It is most grievous to our Lord that any of those who love Him should despise this great Gift, which is His supreme Gift to the believer; even as He, the Son, was the Father's supreme Gift to the sinner. It is through the death of Christ, and by being under the blood that we can receive the Holy Spirit. The holy anointing oil, symbol of the Holy Spirit, could not be put upon flesh, but only upon the high priest and the priests, *after* the blood was applied. "We are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation," "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father." If we look carefully at the significance in here, we shall see that it is God's will for all who have been redeemed by the Blood of His Son, and who approach God to worship or serve Him in any ministry whatsoever, to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

This is plainly commanded by Jesus just before He ascended to the Father. He forbade His disciples to depart from the city until they had received the Holy Spirit. Therefore, in effect, He forbade them to go out and work in His vineyard, or to go about any unnecessary business of their own until they had received the Holy Spirit, whom He was going to pour out upon those who obeyed. The argument, that this applied only to the apostles, is without weight when we read there were one hundred and twenty who received the Spirit on the day of Pentecost; and among this number were the women, including Mary, the mother of Jesus.

With the Aaronic priesthood, none could minister before

the Lord until the blood and the oil were applied. Neither can we, if we have had light, be acceptable to God and offer service pleasing to Him if we despise and are disobedient to this last command, which was given by our Lord just before He ascended to the Father. We must take heed not to despise the oil (the Holy Spirit), claiming that if we are saved and are trusting the Blood of Christ, the baptism in the Holy Spirit is non-essential. There are no non-essentials in the things that God has planned and provided for us, and which Christ has purchased for us with His own precious blood.

Through Jesus Christ, the bride must ever have upon her the sweet odors that come from His manifested life and the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Only as we behold and smell these odors upon one another, can we be refreshed by their fragrance. In the natural, we soon become accustomed to any odor in which we live, and which is upon us, so that we do not even discern it. It is the same in the spiritual. When the attributes of our Lord and the graces of the Holy Spirit begin to adorn us, we may be conscious of them for a little while; but the more they are perfected in our lives, and the more constantly we are enveloped in their spiritual atmosphere, the less we discern the fragrance upon us. Not only is this true of heavenly odors, but it is true of the ill-smelling flesh. The more we are in the flesh, the more unconscious we are of it. The more perfectly we live and walk in the Spirit, the more unconscious we are of it.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE GRACES OF THE BRIDE: THE ETERNAL FOUNTAIN. 4:11-15.

4:11. **"Thy lips, O My bride, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue."** When the bride was tending the vineyards of the world, there was bitterness and deceit in her heart and in her mouth. Sometimes before man, there is an appearance of great sweetness and lovableness in sinners, and their outward living is as honorable and attractive as can be found with many Christians. But all sinners are deceitful toward God, however humble and honest they appear before man; and the excuses they make for not accepting Jesus and being saved, are an evidence of their inward condition. The entreaties of God's children, that they will turn to Christ and be saved, arouse a resentful, arrogant spirit toward God; and bring forth such words of bitterness and anger as are not heard from their lips at any other time.

God's Word says: "Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongue they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips." We are told in one place that the tongue of the wicked is like a sword, and in another verse we read that they have sharpened their tongue like a serpent.

The only way in which the lips can be cleansed of their poison and the tongue of its bitterness is to have the fountain cleansed. When a branch from the Tree of Life is cast into this fountain from whence are the issues of life, and the heart is made clean, all of the words will be changed too. "Out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh."

When the written and the living Word of God have found lodgment in the heart, the bitterness is changed to honey, and the poison is changed to milk. In the nineteenth Psalm we are told that the Word of God is "Sweeter also than honey and the droppings of the honeycomb." The droppings of the honey is the purest honey; and there is a thought also that the comb is filled to overflowing so that drops of pure honey hang from it; not continually dropping, but hanging there ready to drop at the proper time. Not only is the pure sweetness of honey under her tongue, but milk is found there, too.

The milk and honey were some of the promised blessings of the Promised Land, and were an emblem of an abundance of all good things. Spiritual milk and honey are among the promised blessings of our "Land of promises." The honey is sweet, nourishing and soothing; the milk represents nourishment and edification. It is as we discern and feed upon the sincere milk of the Word, that the Word is stored away in our hearts and is found under our tongues. The bride's words are not like the restless waves of shallow water, which roar and foam over the stones and rocks that lie so near the surface, that there is hardly depth to wet one's feet. Under the bride's tongue are words of comfort and sweetness, words of grace seasoned with salt, words that are good for edifying as the need may be, words that give grace to them that hear.

"Pleasant words are as a honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones" (Prov. 16:24). Unless the Spirit has led us to acquaint ourselves with what the Word of God says about our speech, we can hardly imagine the important place it has in the lives of both the saved and the unsaved.

If we could hear all our words that are spoken during even one day, and as they echo back upon us, if we would remember that "out of the fullness of the heart the mouth

speaketh," we should know, as we have never known, what is in our hearts.

"The heart of the wise instructeth his mouth and addeth learning to his lips" (Prov. 16:23). There is no place in our lives where the proof of God's inward working is so wonderfully illustrated as in the relation between the heart and the speech. As the Holy Spirit works in our hearts, staying our thoughts and desires upon God, our words become as the over-filled cells in the honeycomb. They are ladened with the rich, unadulterated milk of the Word.

How precious, both to man and to Christ, are the words of a devoted soul! So precious to Christ, that He has a book of remembrance, which is written before Him, for those who fear Him and speak together, thinking on His Name. Dear child of God, are you asking God to set a watch before your mouth and keep the door of your lips? Are your words so filled with love for your Beloved, and are your thoughts so centered upon Him, that God's book of remembrance is being continually written before Him?

Are your words so Christlike, are they so in the Spirit and acceptable before God, that they are "apples of gold in network of silver" (Prov. 25:11)? There is precious hidden meaning in this verse; the "apples" being the symbol of nourishment and edification, also of the fruits of the Christ-life (S. of Sol. 2:3); the "gold" showing forth the divine; and the "silver" being a symbol of the atonement.

When our hearts are filled with God's thoughts, and human ideas have been put away, our words will shine forth in the likeness of Jesus Christ. They will partake of the divine and will be full of nourishment for weary souls about us. They will give meat and edification to all that hear. Such words from human lips are always framed and supported by the power and grace of Christ's atoning work. They are apples of gold in network of pure, beautiful silver.

God would have naught but the purest words in our mouths, He would have the honey and the milk ever under our tongue. There is a significance in the thought that the refreshing, nourishing words are *under the tongue.* With the child of God, the honey and the milk are not *on the lips,* any more than the poison of asps is *upon the lips* of the sinner. Both the "honey and milk" of the Christian, and the "poison of asps" of the sinner, are hidden away under the tongue; and are only brought forth as occasion demands.

With many unsaved persons, how little one would suspect the presence of any poison, until it is stirred in some way and begins to come forth. With the child of God, there should ever be an abundant supply of honey and milk hidden away under his tongue, which can be brought forth seasonably and at God's command; not unwisely and hastily. There is as much harm done in speaking the right thing in the wrong way or at the wrong time, as there is in speaking the wrong thing.

"And the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon." When Aaron was being installed into the priestly office, he was anointed with the holy oil; and the continual incense which he burned before God, permeated his priestly robes. This perfume of the oil and the incense was ever upon him and upon his sons. In the Song of Solomon, God, through the Spirit, has repeatedly impressed upon us that there is no spiritual fragrance outside of Christ. As we have studied and meditated upon this, we must have received a new vision and apprehension of all there is in Him, hence all there is for us.

We are commanded to put on Jesus Christ; and as He becomes our garment, as He clothes us more and more, His perfumes will be more and more perceptible to those about us. The oriental women perfume their garments with costly oils and spices, so that the air about them is laden with deli-

cate fragrance like the odors of a thousand flowers. Even the least movement of a maiden whose clothing is thus perfumed, sends out sweet odors; and she walks in a cloud of perfumed air. So should it be with us. Our walk and carriage, our appearance and manner of speech, the least movement in our lives, should be surrounded and permeated with precious spiritual perfume, like unto that of the cedars, and sweet-scented trees and flowers of Mount Lebanon.

Oh, how our hearts long that, even in our most common movements and actions, the Christ-life shall be seen and discerned. As we put Him on and are clothed in Him, as we are hidden away in this Divine Garment, the smell of our garments begins to partake of the smell of Lebanon. Though we may have *some* honey and milk in store under our tongues, if this outward perfume is lacking, we rob Christ of His glory. Every aspect and attribute of the bride must be perfected and be like Him.

In the Song of Solomon, it is from every avenue, that the Holy Spirit approaches the beauty and fragrance of both Christ and His bride, as well as the relation that is between them. He pictures them from every viewpoint in order that our hearts may be open to a clearer revelation of our Lord; and our lives be open to the benign influence and inworking, which He is waiting to perfect within us.

4:12. **"A garden shut up, My sister, My bride; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed."** In the Hebrew, the word, "is," is omitted; making the translation as given above. This implies that the bride is distinct from the "garden" in this verse, although in other portions she is spoken of as being part of it.

The Bridegroom has been calling her to come from all doubtful borderland. In order that she may be enouraged to obey, He calls upon her to look out upon the "garden" that He has prepared for her. He would not have her go

forward blindly, He would not have her ignorant of this beautiful land that has been opened up for her, lest she might undervalue her high calling and let holy things become common.

According to Jewish interpretation, this "Garden" is Canaan, the Promised Land. "A land of hills and valleys and drinketh water of the rain of Heaven, a land which Jehovah thy God careth for; the eyes of Jehovah thy God are always upon it from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year." It was this beautiful land which Moses viewed from the border mountain, Mount Pisgah. The spiritual meaning is the Kingdom of Heaven; but the historical setting and interpretation, as related to Christ, is the tomb of Joseph in which they laid the body of our dear Lord. It was a garden within a garden. Christ's tomb in the garden, is within the "Garden" as applied to the Kingdom of Heaven.

"Now in the place where He was crucified there was a *garden;* and in the garden a new tomb wherein was never man yet laid. There then because of the Jews' preparation (for the tomb was nigh at hand) they laid Jesus" (Jno. 19:41). "When even was come, there came a rich man from Arimathæa, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple; this man went to Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded it to be given up. And Joseph took the body, and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb, and departed" (Matt. 27:57-60).

We find by the Word of God, that in the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden belonging to a rich man named Joseph. That this garden was carefully tended is implied by Mary Magdalene mistaking Jesus for the gardener. In this garden, according to a custom of those

days, Joseph had hewn out for himself a tomb in the rock; and in this tomb, upon a bed of spices most fragrant and costly, Joseph laid the body of our precious Lord.

God placed Adam the first in the garden of Eden, a place of light and beauty, where was "every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food." It was in this garden that he listened to the tempter and fell, dragging the whole human race down with him into sin and death.

It was in a garden, overshadowed by darkness that covered the whole land, amid the quaking of the earth and the rending of the rocks, that Jesus Christ, the second Adam, died. It was amid the opening of tombs, from which rose many of the saints who had fallen asleep, that He rose from the dead. And He brought up with Him out of spiritual death all who would believe upon His Name throughout the ages; and He gave unto them everlasting life. Death came through the first Adam in the garden of Eden, and eternal life came through the second Adam in the Garden of the cross and of the tomb.

In order to open the way into the great Garden of the Lord, or the Kingdom of God, our Lord went through two gardens. The first was the garden of Gethsemane, in which He chose concerning the last garden, which is the cross and the tomb. In the last, He finished the work which would open the Kingdom of Heaven to all who would believe upon His Name.

Who has ever understood the agony and suffering our Lord went through, as, alone with God, His Father, He agonized until sweat, as great drops of blood, fell from His face to the ground. Always alone, He passed through those hours of agony, while His disciples slept a short distance away. They could not watch with Him even that last short hour, when He was in dire need of them and their fidelity. But before we condemn them even in our thought, let us

question our hearts as to whether we are watching with Him in this last hour of darkness before His Second Return.

How many of His people today are sleeping, how many are drifting away into error or into indifference, how many who are engaged in His work, are taken up with their weariness or with their own interests! How few are girding their loins more firmly with the Truth, how few are trimming their lamps and are looking that their vessels are filled with oil. How few are longing and watching for His Coming, how few are glad to suffer the reproach of the cross, and the reproach of the Truth of the pure gospel. Are you and I among the few who are watching with Him this last hour of darkness before His Return?

It was in the garden of Gethsemane that He chose that the will of God should be done and naught else. "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from Me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." We sometimes think because He came to die, that there was no choice presented to Him after He reached earth. It is unmistakable that there was a choice, and that it was made with great suffering and agony. Would He beseech God the Father to let the cup pass from Him (at the same time, choosing God's will) if there were no choice? Would He sweat great drops of blood if there were no suffering?

The second garden through which our Lord passed was that garden where He was crucified, and where He was buried; the Hill of Frankincense and the Mountain of Myrrh.

"A spring shut up, a fountain sealed." This spring was the Fountain of life the source of living water. It is He who gives us water so that we shall never thirst. It was He who cried out on the last day of the feast: "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, from within him shall flow rivers of living water." "I am the Bread of life; he that cometh

to Me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall not thirst."

Though Christ was ever the great Fountain of life, until He died, this Fountain was closed toward humanity; and it was not opened until He died, and was raised from the dead. All men were under the sentence of death, and He died that this sentence might be removed, and that all might have life and have it more abundantly. It was when He cried: "It is finished," as He died upon the Cross of Calvary, that this Eternal Fountain was opened.

Jesus Christ was the spring shut up, the fountain sealed. The tomb was sealed by the Romans at the request of the Jews, because Jesus had foretold His resurrection on the third day. For three days the great Fountain of life was sealed in the tomb, not by the Roman seal, but by the foreordained plan of God. "As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

Only as long as God had ordained, could the tomb contain Him. Though a stone like a mountain were upon the tomb, and though it were sealed with the official seals of all nations of earth; though all the guards of Rome and of the Kingdom of Darkness, stood watch outside the tomb, this mighty, living Stream would have gushed forth at the appointed hour. When this Fountain burst forth, all opposition of man was as straws before the ocean. Higher and higher does it rise, bringing life and blessing to all who will rest upon its bosom, and drink of its life-giving flow. Though a million worlds should come to drink at this Fountain, its waters never decrease.

To many, this Spring will ever be shut up, this Fountain will ever be sealed. Jesus said: "No man can come unto Me unless the Father draw him;" but we know that this excludes no one, for God will draw every one who will

come. To all that resist this drawing of God, to all that resist Jesus Christ and obey not the wooing of the Holy Spirit, this Fountain of eternal life will remain "a Spring shut up and a Fountain sealed." All who drink not at this Fountain have no life in them; for "This life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath the life; and He that hath not the Son of God hath not the life."

The Kingdom of Heaven on earth is a Garden enclosed; Salvation is the walls thereof and Christ is the door. Only through Him can any one enter this Garden that Christ has set up on earth, and which will have its full fruition in Heaven.

Personally, each virgin of the bride is a garden or vineyard enclosed and set aside for the Master's use. Every avenue of her life must be given over, sanctified and separated unto God that He may be glorified. Though Christ is the true Vine, it is through the branches He bears fruit; the world judges our Christ by the fruit in our lives. If there are fruits of bitterness, if there is no fruit of righteousness, He is dishonored. It is to those who enter this Great Garden and become a part of it by being planted therein, that God gives "A garland for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of Jehovah, that He may be glorified" (Isa. 61:3).

4:13-15. **"Thy shoots are an orchard of pomegranates, with precious fruits; henna with spikenard plants, spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices. A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and flowing streams from Lebanon."**

Not only did the water of life come forth from this Fountain, but in every place where it has flowed have sprung up beautiful plants, trees of righteousness, spikenard plants

and henna; frankincense, myrrh and the chief spices. Truly, much eternal fruit came up out of the Garden of the tomb. It was not Jesus alone who came out of that tomb, but He brought up with Him every soul that shall ever be saved through faith in Him. And in these "Gardens within a Garden" He will plant such pleasant plants as shall bring glory to God the Father.

Let us not think that this will be unalloyed joy, for when He begins to plant the myrrh of the cross, the frankincense of death and acceptability to God, the spikenard of humility, the henna of Christ's attributes manifested in our lives, it means such breaking up of fallow ground and digging in our lives as is quite dismaying. Only as He clears out the ground can He plant these pleasant plants.

The tender shoots grow and bear fruit; pomegranates and precious fruits, which come from Christ's life flowing within. So beautiful and perfect are these trees of righteousness and tender shoots, that the Holy Spirit calls it a "Paradise of pomegranates." The "pomegranate" is a symbol of fruitfulness; and all the fruit that comes from Christ living out His life in us, is precious, eternal fruit; hence, it is well called "A Paradise of pomegranates." These shoots grow in the Garden of the Lord and are watered by the Fountain of all the gardens.

Closely connected with Christ's life, death and burial, are the precious oils and costly, fragrant spices. As we have said before, in commenting upon the perfumes, which are made so prominent in this book, He alone received gifts of fragrant oil and spices. The anointings He received at the hands of the women who loved Him with a surpassing love, appeared to have been more precious to Him than all else that was done for Him while He was on earth.

The odor of the costly spikenard, with which Mary of Bethany anointed Him, filled the whole house; and, no doubt,

remained upon Him until He lay in the tomb; for the perfume of those rare and precious oils was most penetrating, and lingered for years. As He was led away to the judgment hall, the fragrance of this oil, which had been poured upon Him unto His burial, sent forth from His person clouds like incense. I wonder if that odor reminded the priests of the continual incense. How blind they were that they did not perceive that He who stood before them was the Heavenly Incense of God.

As He stood before Pilate, the anointing perfume must have been perceptible. Before Pilate pronounced the sentence of death upon Him, He had pronounced it upon Himself. "Therefore doth the Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from Me, but I lay it down of Myself" (Jno. 10: 17, 18). The burial anointing was upon Him before the soldiers carried Him to the judgment hall. As He stood among the soldiers arrayed in the royal robe, they must have smelled this strange perfume. As He took up His cross and went outside the city, the air about Him must have been heavy with the odor of that anointing for His burial.

Children of God, followers of the Lamb, how is it with you and me? Do we have the fragrance of the anointing upon us when we stand in man's judgment hall? Does this unearthly perfume linger upon us when we are ridiculed and persecuted? When God brings to us a cross upon which we may put away some unworthy thing, does our perfume go forth, or do we repine? When we take up our cross and go up to the place of death, have we been anointed for the burial? Does this anointing go forth in a cloud of perfume that hides the cross and our suffering from all who behold us?

There are not only *some* trees of frankincense, not only a *large amount* of myrrh and aloes, not only *some* chief

spices, but *all* trees of frankincense, *all* the chief spices. Naught can ever be added to Christ's work upon Calvary; nothing can be added to its efficacy, neither can one grain of spice or perfume be added to its fragrance. "The Hill of Frankincense" exhausted all spiritual frankincense, all praise and acceptability in the whole universe; "The Mountain of Myrrh" left no spiritual myrrh in Heaven or in earth. All was in Christ and all was brought by Christ to erect these precious mountains.

It is He whom the Father hath sealed as the source of eternal life; and He was sealed that living water might flow out and water many gardens. We are told that it is a "Fountain of gardens." The great Garden of the Kingdom of Heaven is made up of many gardens; the great Vineyard of God is made up of many vineyards; but there is only one Fountain that waters, and carries life and refreshment to all.

The mountain of Lebanon derived its name from the white crown of snow, which it wore all the time. Streams of pure, cold water flowed down its sides or found their way through underground channels to the thirsty valleys below. These mountain streams never failed, never became stale and tasteless, warm and unrefreshing. From a higher source than any earthly mountain, comes the living water with which we are refreshed; though the Channel through which it flowed, appeared so lowly when upon earth.

This Fountain of gardens was so uncomely in His human body, this Well of living water was so weak and despised as He hung and died on the cross, that He appeared no greater than any other man as they laid His lifeless body away in the tomb. But this Fountain had its source in the Holy Mountain of God, it issued from the throne of God. It came from the everlasting hills in Heaven and flowed

down to earth, bringing life wherever it flowed, watering the wilderness and making the desert to blossom as a rose.

He is the Fountain of gardens; every garden and every part of God's great Vineyard must receive all its refreshment from Him and Him alone. All our fountains are in Him, He waters the vineyard of your life and mine. It matters not how fierce the wind may blow, nor how hot the valley is through which we are passing, if we keep the connection opened between our souls and the great Fountain of life, the Well of living streams will ever flow from the throne of God. Sometimes they are like rivers, sometimes like hidden underground springs, but they never run dry.

CHAPTER XXV

THE DEALING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN CONVICTION AND COMFORT. 4:16.

4:16. **"Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out."** The word, wind, in both the Hebrew and in the Greek, is the same word that is translated "Spirit." In John 3:8, the word translated, "wind," is the same Greek word that is translated, "Spirit," in other places.

The historical setting of this verse is found in John 14:16 ff. The way into the Kingdom of Heaven was opened through Christ's first advent and death. When the time of His departure drew nigh, He promised His followers that He would not leave them desolate, or orphans; but that He would pray the Father, who would give them another Comforter, even the Holy Spirit; whom the world could not receive.

It was not until Jesus had opened the way into the Garden of the Lord, and was glorified, that the Holy Spirit was poured forth and began His work (Acts 2:32, 33; John 16:8). It is the Spirit who convicts the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment; and He must do this work upon the sinner before he can turn to Christ and be saved.

When the clouds of sin and darkness and doubt have hidden the sky, "The wind (or Spirit) passeth, and cleareth them. Out of the north cometh golden splendor; God hath upon Him terrible majesty" (Job. 37:21, 22). Thus is it with that working of the Holy Spirit, which is here called

the "North wind." As soon as the Holy Spirit was given, He began to reprove and convict. He continues to come in strong conviction of sin, reproving and stirring up to repentance.

He not only comes to the sinner, but He comes to us after we are saved, and as we go on in our Christian lives. It is He who convicts us when we are not living up to our privileges; it is He who teaches us and stirs us up to press on; He shows us where we are slack and where we must put off the flesh, that we may put on Christ. He moves upon the clouds of sin and unbelief, He moves upon the fog of man's theories and self-righteousness. Out of the north, He moves upon all that hides the truth of the gospel from our vision; and as He clears the spiritual atmosphere about us, the golden splendor of the light of God shines into our lives, with the revelation of His terrible majesty.

The Holy Spirit comes to Christ's followers, not only as the north wind, but also as the south wind. It is after the work of conviction, that the Holy Spirit comes as the Comforter. It is after man's unworthiness is uncovered, that the Spirit comes as the balmy south wind. With warm rain and gentle breezes, He brings encouraging movings within us as we listen and yield to Him. As the south wind, the Holy Spirit woos us on and reveals our privileges in Christ, bringing to us a deeper apprehension of the magnitude of the grace of God and the power there is in the blood of Jesus Christ.

It is after He has come with conviction and purging power, showing us our shortage and the vanity of our confidence in ourselves and in our own goodness, that He comes with encouragement and points to our sufficiency in Jesus Christ. It is when, as the north wind, He has blasted all our self-activities; and, through a revelation of ourselves, He has brought us low in the dust in humiliation, that He comes as the gentle Spirit of consolation and reveals to us that

Christ must do all and must be our all and in all. Then He blows upon that which remains after the work of conviction, He gently waters it with warm, refreshing rains, He reveals Jesus Christ as all we need; and the blossoms that are left, begin to grow and bear fruit. The spices begin to send out fragrance.

It was on the day of Pentecost, that the prayer of the Bridegroom was first fulfilled. "There came from Heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." It was at this time that God began to pour forth of His Spirit upon all flesh.

For centuries, believers were filled with the Spirit in the same way, until the Church so far departed from God and the Truth, that the real baptism in the Holy Spirit was nearly lost sight of in the churches. But in these last days, as in the apostolic days, God is again pouring out His Spirit, and the signs are following more and more. This points to the near Coming of our Lord.

"The Garden," which always has the significance of the Kingdom of God, has been set up on earth by the work of Jesus Christ on the Cross of Calvary. In this Garden, God has planted precious plants, costly spices and aromatic herbs. He has planted lilies, which are white and pure, humble and fragrant; and among these lilies is found the One who is the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valleys. It is among the lilies, that the Beloved of the bride feeds and is found. "The Garden" is not only the universal Kingdom of the Lord, not only does the bride feed and work in this Garden, but she is part of it. Her life is a little vineyard which is a part of God's great Vineyard, a little garden which is a part of God's great Garden.

As the Bridegroom prayed to the Father just before He went up to the Hill of Frankincense, that He would send another Comforter who should reveal Him and carry on the work He had begun, so each of us should earnestly pray that the work which the Holy Spirit must do in our "gardens," may be done to the glory of God. Very often, we are more inclined to ask God to bless us and flood our souls with glory, than we are to pray that He will deal and uncover all that is hindering Him from perfecting that which concerneth us. Blessings always come to the faithful, obedient soul, though the north wind may blow first, and is often needed before we can enter into God's best, and can receive the blessings that always accompany God's will.

Dear reader, are we crying from the depths of our hearts, "Awake, O North wind"? Are our hearts longing for Him to blow upon our vineyards in conviction and dealing and testing, however hard it may be on the flesh? Can we pray most fervently that God will send His Spirit, as the north wind, to search out the pride; and that He will blow upon it until it is blasted and drops off, and we are clothed in humility?

Are we praying that the Husbandman will send the Holy Spirit, as the north wind, and strip away the false assurance that believes we have more than we have, and mistakes light for possession? How many times we thought we had entered into possession of those things that God had showed us and called us to begin to possess. How many times God has let us see the blessedness of the path in which we walk alone with Him, and we thought we were walking in it. But when He sent the Spirit to blow upon our lives, we found that He was not our all and in all; that we were depending upon some one else or upon our feelings, rather than upon the Lord.

How little we recognize our own plans and desires, which are as suckers in our spiritual lives. How little we appre-

hend the place we give the flesh and our own interests, our likes and dislikes, our experiences and self-absorption, which eat the strength and life out of our relation and attitude toward God. When God sends the Holy Spirit as the north wind, He comes and uncovers our nakedness, exposing the selfishness of our thoughts, and our false position. With a blast of conviction, He blows upon those suckers, and like a mighty wind He sweeps down upon them to try them. As they fall off, we are left apparently stripped and bare; but, in reality, we are in a better condition to bring forth blossoms and fruit to His glory than we have ever been before.

Can we look up into His face with confidence and say: "Awake, O North wind and blow upon my garden? Lord, send the testings down, and the trials that You see I need; send the hard things that are needed to try every blossom. Blow upon the blossoms in my life that are so beautiful and look as though they would bear luscious fruit for Thy glory. Blow upon them and prove whether they will abide, or whether they have no beginning of fruit in them. Let the wind of Thy dealings prove whether they will fall off because they are all show and cannot stand the test."

How many of God's dealings and revelations, how many of His calls to higher ground, have been rejoiced in and have made much show before our own eyes and in the eyes of others. But we did not yield that God might make them fruitful, and they remained only dealings and revelations, and never became possessions.

God also sends the Spirit, as the north wind, to blow upon every relation in our lives; upon those relations that we deem harmless, but which come between God and us, sapping the spiritual life out of us, and robbing God. Upon every relation that is not of His choosing and to His glory, He sends the Spirit, as the north wind. He separates us from every one and everything that is harming our vine-

yards; He blows upon the human affections, both in us and in those who have a place in our lives; and before His north wind, human love withers up. We see only the circumstances, we see only the instruments that He uses; but if our eyes were anointed, back of all these, we would see the Spirit of God, as the north wind, blowing upon our gardens.

In spiritual things, as in the natural, the blossom is not the fruit. How many times we see a vineyard or fruit tree beautiful with fragrant blossoms, and we begin to look forward to an abundant harvest of fruit. But when the blossoms fall off, and it is time for the fruit to appear, there are only a few small, weakly apples, pears, or grapes, whatever the fruit may be; and all the beautiful blossoms lie decaying and unsightly upon the ground beneath the tree.

So it is in our lives. How many times God deals with us, He shows us the riches and power that are in the gospel; He reveals to us the nearer approaches to Christ Jesus and the high privileges we have in Him. He points out the places where we must have victory and the way to get it. He shows us the preciousness and necessity of letting Him be our all and in all, and letting Him control every avenue of our lives.

We go upon the mount of revelation with God, and He shows us part of the land. As we testify to that which God has been doing, the blossoms begin to appear upon our lives, both before our own vision and that of others. As He calls us to count all things but dross, and suffer the loss of all things that hinder our visions from becoming realities, we do not yield and obey His call. As He begins to lead us down that we may go up and possess the land, we draw back; the very dealing or testing that will establish the fertile blossoms, will wither and kill the barren ones.

Not one blossom, not one dealing that we have received and yielded to, can be harmed by the north wind of God's dealing, which only blasts and withers the superficial and

unfruitful; and the sooner these fall off the better. The sooner we see ourselves stripped of our self-confidence and blindness, of our false hopes and the delusion that we are far beyond the place to which we have really attained before God, the better.

There is one precious privilege that we have, which is not found in the trees and vines of nature. When God sends the Spirit, as the north wind, to convict and to locate us, and we find that we had hardly commenced to possess much of that which we believed we had; if we are humble and penitent, God will begin to deal, and there will appear new, fertile blossoms, which will bear abundant fruit.

God's love and tender thought are manifested in the way He deals along this line. If He sent the Spirit only as the warm, south wind with its balmy breathings, to blow upon our gardens; before the sharp blasts of dealing and conviction of the Spirit, as the north wind, has located and uncovered our shortage, the suckers and sprouts that are not of Him, would grow and thrive. The real life and possibility within us of putting forth fruit, would be choked and killed by self-esteem and false hopes.

It is the strong blasts of the north wind that drive our roots down deeper and deeper, until that which has gone down and is out of sight, is greater and stronger than that which appears above the surface. We are astonished and disheartened as we behold some of the most beautiful blossoms in our lives drop off; those in which we had placed much confidence. But the very blasts of sharp conviction and dealing that destroy the fruitless blossoms, also cause the roots of the spiritual life to go down deeper into Christ; and they become firmly rooted and grounded in Him and in the Truth of the gospel.

To every child of God who has purposed in his heart to go through with Jesus, God will send the searching north

wind of the Spirit that his garden may be stripped and prepared for further dealings; and so that nothing of the flesh shall be encouraged to remain. When He has prepared everything, He will send the south wind of the Spirit in wooing and encouragement, in warm showers, which will refresh and entice the fruitful buds to come out and develop into fruit for the glory of God.

The spices are especially spoken of here; upon them and the significance of their fragrance, we have meditated before as we have progressed through the book. We hardly realize the method that is necessary to bring out the fragrance of the spices and precious gums. The piercing of the bark must cause the pure myrrh to flow, and the crushing of the spices must bring out their perfume. The finer the chief spices are crushed, the more fragrant they are.

The more testings God sends into our lives to purge and purify us, the stronger the searching north wind blows upon our garden, the more spices and fruit are perfected, and the more fragrance and preciousness come forth to the glory of God. The faith that lays hold of God and moves His arm, bringing down miracles from Him, must be tested by the blasts of the north wind. As the Spirit comes in real testing, the faith that is of God will take hold of His precious promises with firmer grasp, and will go deeper into Him.

The love that suffers all things and is kind, must be tried in the furnace before it comes forth as gold. Many times our love toward God and toward man is tried to the uttermost through suffering, but the divine love that comes forth from the heart of God and is shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, will remain and increase. And under this testing, it will send forth such fragrance as it has never had before.

The longsuffering, which is so precious before God, must have something to try it; for the very word brings out the

meaning. To be longsuffering, is to suffer long; and to suffer long is hard on the flesh. The tests always appear to be undeserved and unjust, and it needs the real grace of God for this spice to be perfected so that it may send forth its perfume. It is not the gentle, soothing south wind that wafts abroad the costly spice of longsuffering. It is the north wind that whips and beats it fine, that tests and proves whether it is divine longsuffering, or only a "fair weather" imitation of this heavenly spice.

"Rejoice always, in everything give thanks." We little realize what it means to go through the "all things," and continually give thanks no matter what betides us. We do not apprehend all that lies in the little word, "always," until the Holy Spirit begins to blow upon the joy that has gone forth under the sunshine of God's smile and protection. God must test our rejoicing and thanksgiving to prove whether they will go forth in storms and cold, in afflictions and persecutions, in hardships and deprivation.

Though for a short season when we are children, He lets these graces grow in the warmth of continual sunshine; when we become more mature, He sends the north wind to prove them. He would have us know whether this is "fair weather" rejoicing; or whether it looks past the storms and discerns God's smile; whether it pierces the clouds and knows that God's hand is there in spite of all appearances to the contrary.

As the spices are bruised, the perfumes come forth, for it is the hard things that make the spices give out their odor. It is through manifold temptations, that the spices and fruit are perfected in our lives; we gather them through hard testings and trials, and they are a sweet savor before the face of God. Let God send the north wind upon our lives until His eye sees that it is enough; and then let the south wind blow that the spices thereof may flow out.

Let us look upon everything that is hard and disagreeable as coming from the hand of God; and the precious north wind will drive our roots down deeper, deeper into the living Rock, where the living waters flow, and the wheat and honey that God has promised us, are found.

"Let my Beloved come into His garden and eat His precious fruits." At the time of Christ's first advent, the desire of all who loved God was going out for the setting up of the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth. As is often the case, God's people did not analyze their longings; but the cry of their hearts was, that the Messiah would come down and set up His kingdom upon earth, and eat His precious fruits. In other words, that He would come and do that which God had planned and, in a measure, prophesied should be done by the Messiah.

God's plans are perfect, everything being done or coming at its appointed time. It was "When the fullness of the time came that God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that He might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." After our Lord came to earth, it was only when all things had been fulfilled, that He went to the cross. We are told over and over that the Jews "sought therefore to take Him; and no man laid his hands on Him, because His hour was not yet come." It was when His hour was approaching, and He was hastening to meet it, that Jesus spoke concerning the last passover: "With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer."

To us it might not appear to be "precious fruits" to suffer ignominy and shame; to be deserted by all, even by our nearest and dearest; to be nailed to the cross and die there. It might not appear to us to be "precious fruits" to go through the agony which He suffered in the garden of

Gethsemane. Could we look upon the turning away of the Father's face as "precious fruits"? But to Him who came to do His Father's will, the agony and shame, the ignominy and suffering, the turning away of His Father's face and His death upon the cross, were "precious fruits." To Him, all that lay along the path of the Father's will was precious and sweet; and with desire did He hasten to accomplish that which the Father had given Him to do.

In the fourth chapter of John, He told His disciples that He had meat which they knew not of, and He told them what this meat was. "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to accomplish His work." He could not, because He would not, do anything of Himself; He could not, because He would not, say anything of Himself. He spake and did only those things which the Father gave Him to do and say, and it was His nourishment and refreshment to do the will of God. When we remember all He suffered, we can see how the will of God was indeed His meat and drink; to Him it was more than material food, to accomplish the work that the Father gave Him to do.

Through other Scriptures, we receive great light upon the last clause of the sixteenth verse. It was God's time for the sending forth of the Messiah and everything was ready; the Kingdom of God was being set up on earth, and Jesus came preaching that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand. The winter of the law and of the Old Covenant was past, and the Vineyard of the Lord had been watered by the showers of spring; the Heavenly Solomon, the real Prince of Peace, had come and tabernacled among men.

He had come and finished the work of Him who sent Him, and had come up to the last passover before He suffered. None knew, as He knew, that the offering of the Lamb of God was about to put an end to the old dispensa-

tion with its types and shadows. This was the last passover upon which the approval of God could rest, but the Jews knew it not.

Oh, how blind is man! How hard is the human heart when it is filled with unbelief and pride! Though He, who was the Sacrifice to which all other sacrifices pointed, the only Sacrifice that could avail for sin, stood in the midst of His people, they knew Him not. Though He, the Lamb of God whom the passover lamb prefigured, ate the passover with His disciples, even they did not apprehend the great change that was about to take place. Neither friend nor foe saw any difference between this passover and those which they had eaten in the past. But the Lord knew what was about to take place.

While the Jews killed and fed upon the Jewish passover lamb, as they had done for centuries, the Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world, was taken outside the city and was offered upon "The Hill of Frankincense" (or Calvary). While they were commemorating the passing over of the death angel, and *human life* preserved through the blood upon the door, He came forth from "The Mountain of Myrrh" bringing ETERNAL LIFE to all who would believe on His Name.

Not only does this clause apply to the last supper our Lord ate with His disciples, which historical allusion is very important and precious, but there is a deep and precious personal meaning in it for us who are living in these days. God sends the north wind to blow upon our vineyards; and as we yield to this dealing of the Holy Spirit, the comforting and wooing of the Spirit, as the south wind, come with moisture and refreshment. And the heart of our Lord is made to rejoice as He walks through His Vineyard and smells the fragrance of our spices: as He beholds the fruit that is

being perfected within our lives through the working of the Holy Spirit.

It is His garden and not the bride's; they are His precious fruits and not hers. Though they are perfected in her life and are sometimes spoken of as hers, they are really His; but they are perfected in her through His finished work upon the cross and her union with Him in that work.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE BETROTHAL SUPPER. 5:1.

5:1. **"I am come into My garden, My sister, My bride."** This garden, to which the Bridegroom has come at the beginning of the fifth chapter, is the garden of spices. Everything in it is perfect and mature, nothing green or immature. It is symbolic of the finished work which Christ came to do, and of the fullness of the time for carrying out God's plan for this great salvation through His Son. He came to die that we might stand before God upon that mountain of fragrance, which He wrought upon the Cross of Calvary; and might have boldness to enter into the Holy place and have access to God through Christ's worthiness which is imputed to us.

The historical setting of this verse is the coming of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, to His own possession, in order that He might redeem mankind from the fall, from sin, Satan and death. He came to carry out His Father's plan of salvation, and though His own people did not receive Him, He set His face to do the will of God and to accomplish that which His Father had sent Him to do. Naught could move Him from this supreme purpose; He went steadily onward toward the great consummation of the eternal plan of God. Though the scribes and Pharisees did not believe in Him, though the chief priests and leaders did not receive Him, He was unmoved and undeterred; He moved steadily on to the end. The common people heard Him gladly, and the harlots and publicans received Him and entered into the Kingdom of Heaven before the scribes and Pharisees.

From the rib that God took from Adam's side, He prepared a bride for Adam the first. Only as Eve partook of the same nature and was made like unto Adam could she be a help meet for him. So it is with Jesus Christ and His bride, though in a much fuller way. When God would have a bride for His Son, the Son of God must be made like unto her, else He could not be joined to her. The highest archangel could not redeem man; nor could God redeem him, excepting as His Son became a man that He might die for sinners.

"Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death He might bring to naught him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; . . . Wherefore it behooved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (Heb. 2:14-17).

Wherefore He came and took the form of a servant, becoming a man that He might redeem humanity, and that those whom He redeemed might become His bride. After we are redeemed, there is a further preparation if we would sit with Christ upon His throne. We must be transfigured into the likeness of Jesus Christ, we must be made like unto the second Adam even as Eve must be made like unto the first Adam. This can only be done as we put on Jesus Christ through His work upon the cross, and through our union with Him in that work.

How His heart longed to eat this last passover with His disciples before He suffered. He knew it was the beginning of the end, and that the passover of the Jews was about to pass away in the slaying of the Lamb of God. With His disciples, who were the first fruits of the bride, and whom He was about to betroth to Himself, did He eat the

last Jewish passover. And when this was eaten, He instituted the betrothal supper (the "Lord's supper," or the "Communion"), which shows forth His death until He comes; and which we eat in remembrance of Him. The Jewish passover looked forward to the death of God's Lamb; the Christian ordinance, which takes the place of the passover with us, looks back to the death of Christ, the Lamb of God; and is an emblem of our union with Him in His death. It also looks forward to His return.

As this Jewish ordinance, with all other ordinances of the Jewish worship, was set aside, and in its place Jesus instituted the Lord's supper, the Dispensation of Grace was ushered in; and the heart of our Lord rejoiced. It was "The day of the gladness of His heart."

His disciples represented that company that will follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. They were the first fruits of the innumerable company that will wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. "I am come into My garden, My sister, My bride;" I have come down here to do My Father's business; I have become a man that I may redeem My beloved, and that she may be My bride, I became sin that she might array herself in fine linen, bright and pure.

He calls her His sister, His spouse. Jesus Christ's mother was Humanity through Eve, but He was born of the Holy Spirit, and His Father is God. The bride's mother is also Humanity, but at the new birth, she is born of the Holy Spirit, and her Father is God. Therefore, He calls His people, His brethren, because they have been brought nigh through His blood, and have been adopted into His Father's family. From His Father's children, He will take a bride for Himself.

"I have gathered My myrrh with My spice; I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey; I have drunk My wine with My milk." He counts it all done although He has not

passed through those last hours of agony. Not only during those last hours of His life did He count it done, but ages before the world was made, it was counted done in the thought of God. He was "The Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world."

Only while He was on earth did He gather those precious spices. He ever yielded to the will of God, and was ever learning obedience through the things He suffered. At the last He could say: "I have gathered My myrrh with My spice, I have accomplished the work which thou hast given me to do; those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled."

It is not easy to gather myrrh and spices in the wilderness of this world, nor was it easy for our Lord. Even His brothers did not believe in Him. How strange it seems that they doubted Him when they must have seen His spotless life in the home; the perfection of His daily living as He lived among them, and for thirty years was subject to His parents. Though Mary saw the angel and heard the announcement concerning this Child that was to be born of her, though she passed through the miraculous experience of the immaculate conception; though all things came to pass as were spoken by the angel Gabriel, she did not understand her Son Jesus; neither did she comprehend the work He had come to do.

Though His disciples walked with Him and heard His words daily during the years of His ministry, they could not understand the path which was before Him, and in which He was walking. They could not comprehend that He must go to the cross and die. They did not apprehend that, unless He gathered His myrrh and His spice, He had come in vain. They knew not that He must drink His wine, the cup His Father gave Him to drink.

Over and over did He plainly tell them that He must suffer many things of the elders and of the chief priests, that He must be crucified and rise the third day, "But they understood not this saying, and it was concealed from them, that they should not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this saying" (Luke 9:45).

So is it with those who follow Him closely, those whose feet press the path that He trod, who step in the footprints that He made. The closer they walk with Him, the more they pour out their lives that they may gather the myrrh and spices, the less they are understood and the more they suffer. A strange feature, which ever accompanies the gathering of this sweet cargo to take up to God, is that rarely, if ever, does any one around us perceive that we have been gathering spices. It seems that the most of this precious cargo is only seen and enjoyed by God; for He alone knows that which we gather, as He brings us through trials and testings.

Isaiah tells us that many were astonished at Him, "His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men." And again: "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their face He was despised; and we esteemed Him not" (Isa. 52, 53). There is more than a figurative or surface meaning in these words spoken by Isaiah. If our eyes are anointed, we shall see the evidences of what it cost Jesus Christ to come and to suffer for us, to come that He might do His Father's will, that He might eat His precious fruits; for without coming down to earth as He did, He would not have had precious fruits to eat.

It was not easy for Him to come down to earth and gather His myrrh with His spice. It was not a small thing for Him to come and drink the cup of God's wrath unmixed, in order that our cup might be mingled with mercy.

The myrrh and frankincense, the chief spices, which came from His work, did not stop with His life upon earth, nor with His death upon the cross. There is a precious harvest of perfume and incense, which is still increasing and being perfected through the members of His body, as they yield to Him, and enter into fellowship with Him in His sufferings.

"I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey." The symbol is parallel to Isa. 7:14, 15. "Butter (or "curds") and honey shall He eat till He knoweth to refuse the evil, and choose the good." In those days, the first food given babes was honey; and then they were given milk. The symbolic meaning of "honey" in the Messianic prophecy, is the pure, perfect humanity of Jesus Christ. And this is also one meaning in this verse in the Song of Solomon which we are now considering.

Though He was sinless, it was as a man, that He lived His life here on earth. In all things, He was made like unto us. He did not live as the Son of God but as the Son of Man. He became tired and hungry, He suffered as a man, and He did this that He might gather His myrrh for the Mountain of Myrrh, and His spices to take up to the Father. He partook of the honeycomb that He might eat the last passover with His disciples, and in order that we might eat at His table in remembrance of Him, and thus show forth His death until He come.

Honey is also a symbol of the Word of God, and though these meanings may appear diverse, the spiritual connection is most precious and uplifting. To feed upon God's Word, is to so yield to God that His Word and the gospel become flesh in us as it is daily lived out in our lives. It was when Jesus yielded to the will and plan of God, becoming a man that He might redeem man, that He ate His honeycomb and honey.

There is a still further and deeper significance in this. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him; and without Him was not anything made that hath been made. . . . *And the Word became flesh,* and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth." Not only did He eat the Word of God when He partook of flesh and blood, but He who thus humbled Himself was "The Word of God."

"I have drunk My wine with My milk. Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." His wine was the cup that the Father gave Him to drink; it was the cup of the wrath of God, of judgment and the sentence, which had been pronounced upon all mankind through sin and the fall. He drank, unmixed, the cup of God's wrath, and trod the winepress alone. Through His sacrifice, grace and mercy are extended to all who will believe upon His Name. But God will not always strive, neither will He hold His anger forever; and the day is approaching when He will yet bring vengeance upon those who receive not His Sacrifice.

None but Himself could drink this cup that God prepared for Him. To Him, it was a cup of suffering and judgment unmingled with mercy; and He drank it that He might give to us a cup of mercy unmingled with judgment. He drank the cup of condemnation through the broken law of God, that He might give to us the cup of grace and truth. He took the cup of God's wrath and drained it to the dregs, that we might "Take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord."

The cup that He drank, was the cup filled with His own agony and death because He took our place; and it was pressed to His lips by His Father's hand. The cup that He gives us to drink is fellowship in His blood or death. But

when He drank His wine (or cup), He took all the bitterness and sting out of the cup He gives us. He drank the cup of our sin and guilt imputed to Him, and we drink the cup of His righteousness imputed to us.

Throughout eternal ages, we shall never know what our Lord paid for us; only as we tasted the despair and agony of the damned, could we know what He has saved us from. He passed through that which was due us, God's face was turned from Him instead of from us. Though He came to do the will of God, as the moment approached when He must become sin and suffer the anguish of those who are cut off from God's face, His human nature shrank back: "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not my will but Thine be done."

What was the cup to which He referred, when He asked those disciples if they were able to drink the cup that He was about to drink? It was this cup of which He speaks in the Song of Solomon, the wine of the wrath of God. He drank it so that you and I need not drink it. If He had not drunk that cup, we would have to drink it; we would have God's face turned away from us, and would be forever banished from His presence.

It was as He was about to drink that cup, that He said: "Now is the Son of man glorified." Do you and I take that stand when we are going up to the cross, and know that we are about to follow Jesus to the place of death along some line? Do we rejoice? is it the day of the gladness of our hearts? Do we apprehend that we are being glorified in Christ, and that the Son is being glorified in us, as we follow Him to the place of death? Is it a joy to us when the stroke of God's dealing comes upon something in our lives that has been very dear to us? and do we remember that now is the Son glorified in us, and we are glorified in Him?

"And My milk." The milk is the emblem of God's Word.

The Word of God had become flesh, and had come down and tabernacled among men. This also is an emblem of His humanity, but there is a deeper significance in it, which is most precious, and is for our admonition and encouragement. There had not one plan or Word of God concerning Him been overlooked; but He had finished that which God gave Him to do. All God had commanded Him to do, He had done; all that God had planned for Him to suffer, for Him to bear, for Him to say, He had done. He had drunk His milk to the last drop. There was not one thing of which He had failed to partake. Every service God had required of Him He had fulfilled.

Did you ever meditate upon it, and ask God that you might apprehend and enter into the real meaning and experience, of desiring and feeding upon the sincere milk of the Word? To feed upon the sincere milk of God's Word and of the gospel of Jesus Christ, is to so partake of the death of Jesus Christ, and to so yield to the will of God in all things, that the Gospel and God's Word will become flesh in you. That is what the Bridegroom means in the last part of this verse. "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." It is as though He said, "I have eaten it all for you, I have gathered My myrrh and My spice, I have eaten honeycomb with My honey; I have drunk My wine with My milk. I have come and offered Myself as a sweet savor before the Father in your behalf, I have become a man like unto you, I have drunk the cup of the wrath of God, I have fulfilled all His Word, I have eaten to the full of all this, that you also might eat and drink to the full of that which I have purchased for you."

"With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer. Now, O friends, eat! Eat! Drink abundantly. Do not eat only a little of the Bread of life; do not feed upon Me only now and then. Do not shrink from the

cross and yield to it only occasionally and reluctantly. Do not be satisfied with only a taste of that which I have done for you. Drink to the full, until rivers of living water flow out from your innermost beings to all around."

Through our union with Him, He would have us partake of His death, until all the movements of our own desires and our own selves shall forever be silenced. He would have us drink of that cup which He has mixed with mercy, until the perfect will and working of God is fully accomplished in our lives unto transformation into His image. He would have our lives filled with all He has purchased for us through His own precious blood.

Though we do partake with Him in death, it is not the same bitter cup that He drank, but it is entering into the death which He has already provided. Though there is suffering, it is not the suffering that He suffered, but it is that which purifies and brings joy to the devoted soul. How little we have to go through in order to drink the cup that He holds out to us; for God prepared the works afore that we should walk in them (Eph. 2:10).

Let us get before Him and behold Him as He sat with those beloved disciples and ate that last supper; let us behold Him as He girded Himself with a towel and washed their feet; let us behold Him as He commanded them to eat of the loaf, which was an emblem of His broken body, and drink of the cup, which was an emblem of His shed blood. Beloved, let us behold Him as He went out into the darkness of the night into Gethsemane, where He agonized before the Father, and sweat great drops of blood. Let us see Him as He went out into that awful darkness that fell over Him as He hung upon the cross for you and for me. Let us behold Him as He cried: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Let us behold Him as our Heavenly Bridegroom who gave

His life for us, and for whom we must live and to whom we must give our lives. Let us pray that our hearts may take in the stupendous fact that we are betrothed to Him. Every time we come to His table and partake of those sacred emblems, we are observing that betrothal supper, which was first eaten by Him and the little handful of His disciples who were the first fruits of the virgins of the bride. Every time we eat at His table, we show forth His death for us until He come; we show forth His bespeaking us to be His spotless bride; we show forth that we are betrothed to Him.

This is to be precious to us. By faith and communion, we are to keep ourselves reminded that we belong to Him by conquest, by purchase, by choice and by betrothal; He will not have one in His bride who is flirting around with the world. Though our Beloved has gone to a far country, His eyes are upon us all the time, He is watching us all the time; He is with us continually, dwelling in that Holy of holies within our beings. How often we forget that He is looking at us. "Oh, that God may make these things real to me!" should be the cry of our hearts.

How easily we forget what our Lord has done for us; how easily we forget that He is with us continually, whether sleeping or waking, whether loyal or disloyal to Him. Whether we are walking worthily or not, His eyes are upon us, and He hears the very thoughts of our hearts. It matters about no one else, it matters about nothing else, if we are only true, as pure virgins, to Him who is soon to come and take us to Himself that where He is there we may be also.

We are standing on His wonderful finished work, which is symbolized by the Mountain of Spices that arose from the Mountain of Myrrh and the Hill of Frankincense; the fragrance of which reaches down through the ages and envelops us. Through this alone that He has provided, can

we gather the myrrh and the fragrance. If we do this, long before we come to meet Him, the fragrance of our cargoes of myrrh, frankincense and spices will sweep up to Glory, like the smoke of continual incense before the face of God. Not only must we gather it, but we must guard all we gather as we would guard untold treasure, lest we lose any of that which God has enabled us to gather, and do not have it to present to our Lord when we come and appear before Him.

Many times instead of gathering myrrh, we gather wormwood or bitter roots; instead of gathering spices and frankincense we gather thistles and thorns. When we should be gathering the spikenard of humility, we are gathering the vile smelling weeds of pride; when we should be gathering the precious attributes of Jesus Christ, we are holding on to the poisonous weeds of our own flesh; when we should be laying in the fragrant oils of the fruit of the Spirit, we are holding on to our own fleshly works.

I wonder what kind of a cargo you and I are gathering as the days go by. If we could see all we have gathered and are holding fast, would we find that it is a cargo that we can present to our Lord? He will only accept that which we have gathered from His Mountains of Spices, the finished work of Calvary, through the Hill of Frankincense, the cross, and the Mountain of Myrrh, the tomb, from which we arose together with Him triumphant over all our foes.

Canticle Four. *Ch. 5:2 to 8:5*

CHAPTER XXVII

THE SLEEPING BRIDE. 5:2.

With ch. 5:2 begins the fourth Canticle, which, historically, embraces the time from the agony in Gethsemane to the revival in Samaria. Between the last of Canticle third (ch. 5:1), and the beginning of the fourth Canticle, there has been another absence, which is set forth in the second verse of this chapter.

The scene is suddenly changed, and the time moves on from evening to midnight. In the last part of the third Canticle, the shadows had already commenced to fall, although the disciples did not discern them. Those gathering shadows were the harbinger of the awful darkness which would soon cover the earth as the King of glory died.

In ch. 4:6, the Bridegroom bade His bride farewell before the betrothal supper. This corresponds to that last tender farewell discourse, which is given in John 13 to 17 inclusive. The tender words our dear Lord spoke to those bewildered disciples, have comforted us in many a perplexity. We have fed upon His last words, and have taken them to ourselves for our needs as though they were spoken to us personally.

It was at this time that Peter so emphatically affirmed that if he died he would never forsake His Lord. It was at this time, that Jesus made such far-reaching and precious promises to His followers. It was at this time that He

warned all who would come after Him, that they would be hated of the world. He revealed to them many precious things, which they did not understand then, but which they remembered and understood after He had risen from the dead. It was at this time that He promised to send the Comforter.

They were rejoicing as they sat and ate the passover with Him; but even before this was over, their hearts were filled with consternation as He told them that one of their number would betray Him. Then He gave the sop to Judas, who went out. Not until Jesus was left alone with the eleven who loved Him and were loyal to Him did He speak that precious, parting discourse to His disciples. And now it was ended. They had eaten the last passover they would ever eat; they had partaken of the first "Communion," or Sacrament, which was to show forth His death until He came.

The shadows were rapidly growing darker and darker as the prince of this world came, and the hosts of darkness settled down upon the earth. After the passover, Jesus went forth with His disciples into the Mount of Olives; and He began to be sorrowful and sore distressed. Leaving the disciples, He took with Him Peter and James and John: "Then saith He unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; abide ye here, and watch with me. And He went forward a little and fell on His face."

5:2. **"I was asleep, but my heart waked."** It is the bride who is speaking here, and, historically, it represents those disciples who were among the first virgins of the bride of the Lamb, and who, though they loved Him with their whole hearts, could not watch with Him even one hour. Their heart waked, but they were heavy with sleep; and while He was praying, they were asleep. He had taken them with Him that in the hour of His agony, they might watch with Him; but although the Lord had told them that He was exceeding

sorrowful, even unto death, three times when He came to them did He find them asleep.

It was not only that they were overcome by physical slumber, but there was a spiritual heaviness upon them. Thrice did He come from His agonizing prayer and waken them; and as soon as He left them they again fell asleep. The spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak; the heart waked, but they were asleep. They failed to be the comfort to Him that His heart craved. They failed to fulfill this last ministry to their Lord, which He offered them before He died.

How courageously did Peter declare that he would die for his Lord, but Jesus warned him that before the cock crew, he would deny Him thrice. And when He found the disciples asleep it was as though He said to Peter: " 'Canst thou not watch with Me one hour?' If thou canst not watch with Me and pray during this hour of My distress, how canst thou face death for Me? If thou canst not run with the footmen, how wilt thou contend with horses? 'But I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not.' Thou shalt indeed contend with horses for My sake, thou shalt indeed pass through the swelling of the Jordan. Thou shalt indeed die upon the cross for My name's sake, as I am about to die upon the cross for thy redemption."

Do you think if those disciples had apprehended His words announcing His death, that they could have lain down and slept? Do you believe they would have slept if they had comprehended that the passover they had just eaten, was the last passover they would ever eat with their Lord? Could they have slumbered if they had really apprehended the sufferings through which their Lord was passing?

The eyes and hearts of many of the redeemed are heavy with sleep; and we sometimes forget that Christ is calling us to watch with Him this last hour before His Second Coming. We know not how long or how short an hour God is going to keep us waiting for our Heavenly Bridegroom. Let

us take heed to ourselves, for the voice of our Beloved has sounded in our hearts, calling us to watch with Him this last hour. The disciples had only that one hour with their Lord, and they slept it away; when it had passed, the soldiers came and tore Him from them. They were never with Him in the same way again.

We, too, have only this last hour to prove our love and fidelity to our Beloved and to prepare for His Coming. If we fail Him in this last hour, slumbering away the time, we shall not be ready when He comes, and we shall lose God's best. How many of the virgins who have entered the race for the crown that the overcomers will wear, are in the condition which is pictured here in Song of Solomon 5:2. With great desire do they follow the Lord until they reach a place of deep touch and communion, and then they lie down to take their rest.

It takes divine strength and perseverance to press on, and they become tired or discouraged and let down. There is a place where we can rest and be satisfied with less than the best God has for us. This lower choice does not require as much diligence and determination and hard following after Him; but those who get God's best will not be allowed to relax in the least, nor stop for one moment. If we let down even a little, we lose time and fall behind; and when we fall behind the light God has given us, we must make up that ground. If we get off the path and wander away, it is over a long, weary path that we must return; and it requires much dealing and working upon us by the Spirit, to get us started again the right way.

Let us prevail for a deeper love for our Lord. Many times we make the sad mistake of measuring our love by our devotion and yearning when we are in prayer or having sweet communion with Him. The only way in which to measure our love for our Lord, is by those moments when we are the

least drawn to Him and are the least like Him. We rarely ever love Him as much as we think we do, for we take our strongest moments as an indication of the strength of our love; but we should let our weakest moments be the indication of the strength of our love. A chain is only as strong as its weakest link, and our love for our Lord is only as strong as those moments when it is the weakest and we are the most indifferent.

"I was asleep, but my heart waked." The bride has prepared herself to take it easy. Her soul would have shrunk from being entirely asleep, she would have been afraid if she had been asleep both heart and body, so that she could not hear His voice. She has prepared herself to rest, but her heart is still in a condition where she can hear the voice of her Beloved. She is lying at ease, but she keeps the sleeping and waking evenly balanced. The fact that she can hear His voice, helps to reassure her and to hide the danger she is in from taking her ease and slumbering.

There is also a thought hidden away here that sounds a solemn warning. When a soul is following hard after the Lord, those about her cannot understand, and persecution follows. This we see befell the bride as soon as she arose and went about the city. As long as she lay at ease, she had the admiration of those about her; they recognized that she knew the Bridegroom's voice, they knew that she was not entirely asleep.

If we are willing to rest and be at ease and are not too zealous, even those who are fully asleep will admire us when they see we know the voice of the Lord. Neither the world nor backslidden Christians like too much zeal, which they always call fanaticism. The soiling of the feet is symbolic of the slur and stigma that attach themselves to those who follow after the Lord too fervently.

We know the bride did not go into sin and infidelity,

for the Lord calls her His love, His dove, His undefiled. He could not call her His dove, His undefiled, if she were guilty of spiritual adultery. His love was upon her, and her love was toward Him; she had been waiting for Him to come and was still waiting for Him, though she had become weary and despondent and had gone to rest. She had kept her robe spotless, and her heart was listening for His voice, but she had fallen asleep. Not only that, she had deliberately prepared to be at ease. She had washed her feet, she had put off her garment, she had lain down upon her couch with the express purpose of sleep and rest; but she would not let the sleep embrace her heart also.

The Lord is calling the bride to a place of more intimate communion with Himself, to suffer the reproach of the cross and enter into fellowship in His suffering. He is calling her to come outside the city wall and meet Him in the only place where a soul can ever meet Him, and that is at the foot of the cross. The cross is always without the gate, away from ease and from the admiration of the crowds around us.

Do we realize, when we ask the Lord for a closer place of communion, when we cry and pray that He will give us a deeper revelation of Himself, that it will mean the shaking of the whole being if we go to the place where He is waiting for us?

How earnestly the bride wishes that her Lord were inside the door. She hears His knock, she hears His voice, she longs that He may come in and sup with her, that He may come in and reveal Himself to her more clearly. But if she goes to the door and unlocks it, she must be wholly aroused, wholly awake. It will mean, not only an arousing, but leaving her couch of ease and slumber, and soiling her feet through the reproach and misunderstanding of those about her.

When we know the voice of God and are nearer than the

indifferent and backslidden ones around us, we have their admiration. They look up to us as being further along than they, and we are not following hard enough to convict them. But the voice of God stirring us up, reveals to them the condition we are in; and they see that they have considered us higher than we deserve, which always arouses resentment. They begin to despise and look upon us as beneath the place to which we have really attained.

We may be in the place to hear and know the voice of our Lord in a measure, and yet not follow after Him hard enough to convict any one. We love Him; we are not backslidden into sin, only into indolence, and love of ease, and the admiration of others. We are still His "undefiled one." We would not leave Him altogether to gain this admiration, but we love the place of evenly balanced half-sleep and half-waking that is here described. We walk carefully; we live carefully; in a way, we are looking for His Coming and talking much about it.

It is so comforting and pleasing to be in this place of half-slumber. It does not require any girding up of the loins. We do not need to set our faces like a flint, in order to abide in the place of half-sleep. We are not following hard after Him; we are not counting all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. We are not suffering the loss of all things that we may know Christ, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, becoming conformed unto His death; that we may attain unto the out-resurrection from the dead.

We have not faithfully shod our feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; we have not continued steadfastly in prayer; we have not been entering into a closer touch with Him, and putting Him on in ever-increasing abandonment and separation. How many times, we hear Him calling us to come up on higher ground; we rejoice because

of the Bridegroom's voice, and because of the visions of the land of far distances that He reveals to us. We long to enter into this closer relation, but how are we to get out of the place of ease in which we are now living? How can we go on into that place of deeper communion, without revealing the lack in our lives to those about us? How can we get up and open the door, and still retain the influence we have with others because we know the Lord better than they do?

How sad it is to remember that with the ten virgins who "went forth to meet the Bridegroom," it was not only the foolish virgins who slumbered and slept, but "they *all* slumbered and slept." "ALL!" When the midnight cry went forth, it was not only the foolish virgins but also the wise virgins, that were found sleeping, and needed to be awakened. It was not only the foolish virgins but also the wise virgins that had to arise and trim their lamps.

Even the virgins who were the true bride of the Lamb were sleeping; though their lamps were burning beside them, and their vessels were full of oil. They sleep, but their hearts wake, and they hear the cry when it goes forth at midnight: "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him." And when they are awakened, they, too, must arise and trim their lamps, which they have let smoulder and go untrimmed. The charred crust of accumulated dust and carelessness, has gathered upon the wicks, and they cannot go forth until they have trimmed off this charred blackness, which sends forth an evil odor and smoke, hindering the light from shining bright and clear.

In the Jewish Temple, Aaron was commanded to trim the lamps in the golden candlestick from evening to morning, so that the light would go forth pure and bright. "Evening to morning" has the same spiritual significance as night has in the Song of Solomon; it represents the night of the

absence of the Messiah. As Aaron kept the lamps from evening to morning in that temple, so must the bride of Christ keep her lamp clear from all dust and charred crusts. She must keep it, trim it, watch it, not only occasionally, but all the time from evening to morning. She must watch her lamp from the time she becomes a child of God, throughout all the night of this dispensation, until the day break and the shadows flee away.

She must keep awake and carefully trim her lamp, not only when the Holy Spirit stirs her up to seek her Lord more diligently and go on with Him, but she must bestir herself and trim her lamp at those moments when she is tempted to go to sleep or lag behind. As she does this, the working of the Holy Spirit will be deeper and more continuous, and her hunger and zeal will be stirred up and increase more and more. Her light will shine with increasing brilliancy unto the perfect day.

There is no time to lose, for behold, the Bridegroom cometh, and if we would be ready to go out and meet Him, if we would be ready to go in to the marriage supper of the Lamb, we must arouse ourselves. We must look and see whether our lamps are burning brightly, we must see whether our vessels are filled with oil. We must examine our condition and see if we have been lulled to rest by the false confidence that is begotten of knowing that we hear the voice of the Bridegroom, although we are in a half-sleep.

"It is the voice of my Beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to Me, My sister, My love, My dove, My undefiled." The word, "voice," means "sound." It is the sound of her Beloved that knocketh at the door. The Bridegroom knocks, not only once, but He continues to knock; He calls her to arise and shake off the slumber that locks her in its embrace.

She is His sister because she has been born of God. He is her brother because He has partaken of the same human

nature. They are brother and sister because both have partaken of humanity on the mother's side, and are children of God, who is their Father. As Isaac must have a bride from his father's kinsmen, so Christ takes His bride from among those who have been redeemed and are of His Father's family. As Isaac took only one damsel from among the relatives of his father, so Christ will choose those from His Father's house who will ever say: "We will go with this man;" and will not only say it, but will forget their father's house and cling to Him alone.

That only the overcomers will be in the bride of Christ, is clearly set forth by the fact that God did not take Adam's whole body, but only one of his ribs from which to make Eve. Literally: "He builded the rib into a woman." If they will pay the price, all the redeemed can be in the bride of the Lamb and follow Him whithersoever He goeth. But all that are in that blest company must learn to follow in Christ's footsteps while down here on earth. By way of the cross, they must follow Him step by step up to His throne, overcoming through the Blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony. He came from the throne to the cross for our sakes; and only from the cross, and by the way of the cross can we go to the throne.

It is not a small thing for the King of glory and the Lord of lords to knock at the doors of our hearts and call us His love. Even when we are selfish and not zealous to hasten after Him, we can hear His voice calling and wooing us; speaking in endearing terms to us. Many times has He called us to arise and to come away; many times, if He had not come and called and knocked at the doors of our hearts, we would have gone down into the sleep of death.

Many times has He stayed out in the night while we were safely lying in a bed of ease. How many times, when those who love not the Lord sneer and cast doubt and re-

proach upon Him, those that are called by His name shrink back in silence and ease. They let Him bear the reproach alone; they let Him stand out in the night because they are too cowardly to bring Him in, and, before all around them, claim Him as their Beloved.

How often when our Lord is bringing to us a deeper revelation of Himself and His love, He finds us asleep. We have washed our feet of all the dust of the day, and also of all the stigma with which an eager running after the Lord is accompanied. We have put off our garment, we have prepared a soft bed of ease, and we have said to our souls: "A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep." We have deceived ourselves into believing that we shall be more ready, and stronger to run after our Lord because of this deliberately planned, and taken rest.

We forget that it is through "a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep, so shall thy poverty come as a robber, and thy want as an armed man." Thus it was with the bride, her poverty came as a robber, and her want as an armed man; her Lord left her, and she spent many weary hours and took many weary steps before she again found Him.

She was not only His love and His dove, but she was still His "undefiled." This shows that her greatest sin was lying down to rest and not watching with wide-open eyes for His Coming. And when He came, she had been slow to rise and let Him in, she had kept Him waiting throughout the night. She had not gone off into spiritual fornication, she had not been flirting with those who hated Him, as many who are called by His Name are doing in these days; she had not lost her chastity. She had been indolent, she had become tired and perhaps despondent because of His delay. She had thought to lie down and rest, but not to go to sleep; but she was soon lulled into a half-slumber.

It is not always in the easy places and in sweetness, that the voice of our Beloved comes to us. Many times He comes in conviction, bereavement, and in the hard things; and God wants us so wide awake that we can hear His voice clearly when He speaks in the hardest things. The place where the redeemed can hear His voice the oftenest, is when a choice is presented to go outside the gate and bear His reproach. He speaks to our hearts and we hear Him say: "If any man would come after me, let him take up his cross daily and follow me."

Dear child of God, if your heart is toward God, in everything that touches your life, you can hear the voice of your Beloved knocking on the door of your heart and saying: "Open to Me, my sister, My love, My dove, My undefiled." In every separation, you can hear the voice of our dear Lord knocking at the door of your heart. If you hasten and open to Him, He will come in and sup with you; and He will be more to you than all from which He has separated you.

There is no place where the enemy can deceive us so easily and subtly as when we have had a real experience, perhaps a deep experience and revelation from God. The enemy will try to make us rest down upon what God has done, and take things easy. But the Christian life, from the first to the last step, is like climbing the steepest snow-covered mountain peaks. If the mountaineer stops, he begins sliding downward over the road he has just traveled, much faster than he climbed up. The faster he climbs upward, the less he stumbles and the easier he finds the journey.

How often when the Lord is knocking at our hearts, and His voice is sounding in the hard things, we are not awake enough to recognize His voice. We see only the person, the thing, or the circumstance through which He is calling us to open to Him.

Oh! let us listen in the hard things until we hear His

precious voice knocking at the doors of our hearts, let us eagerly arise if we have lain down to rest. Let us open wide the doors of our hearts and lives by embracing the cross and obeying God, and He will come in and spread such a feast before us as will make us lose sight of all suffering; He will sup with us and we shall sup with Him.

"Open to Me." Whenever we wander away from our dear Lord in the least degree, He comes and calls us to open to Him. The attitude of the bride shows the indifference that has already taken hold of her. She has not only closed, but has locked and bolted the door. When she locked the door, she did not mean to lock *Him* out; she only desired that her rest might be undisturbed. She did not deliberately prepare herself to sleep, determining not to get up and let *Him* in; she did not deliberately lock the door so that *He* could not get in. She did all of this almost unconsciously.

This is always the way slumber steals upon the followers of the Lamb. It is not their set purpose to reach the place where at last they find themselves, nor to settle down in the place of sleep and indifference where they finally arrive. They forget that it is through the avenue of sleep and indifference, that spiritual poverty comes and robs them of the sweet unction of the Holy One; that it is in this way, Want and Need come upon them, as an armed man with whom they cannot cope. Slumber does not prepare us for battle, it only paves the way for us to be defeated and robbed.

"For My head is filled with the dew." In oriental countries the dew is very heavy. During the night of His betrayal, when Jesus was lying upon His face in the garden of Gethsemane, His head was filled with the literal dew of the night; and His disciples were taking their rest, unmoved by the agony of their Lord.

Oh! how miserable are we, for whom our precious Lord has borne such agony and shame! How heartless! How

little and mean are all our relations to Him! How little He gets out of this heritage, which He has bought at such a price! Behold Him who has died for the bride, standing during the night, waiting, knocking, until His head is wet with the moisture of the night. Behold her lying sheltered within, half sleeping, indolent, shrinking from getting even her feet dusty.

She has besought Him to tell her where He was feeding His flock, and He brought her into His Banqueting House. He has upheld her by the strong hand of His providence, and has ministered to her and caressed her with the gracious hand of His love, mercy and grace. Through His death, He has opened up those clefts in the Rock where she can hide away from the enemy, from the vultures and the beasts of prey. Behold Him now, standing outside the door, knocking, calling, waiting.

First, He tried to win her with gentle, loving words and wooing. Truly, the lovingkindness and longsuffering of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting, and never faileth, else would we all have been cut off long since. Not only did the disciples fail their Lord and sleep in the hour of His extremity and agony, not only does the bride fall asleep; but over and over do His people fail Him.

Let us not consider this portion of the Word of God as though it could have no application or meaning for us. Many times have we been more guilty than is here depicted. Do we not leave Him out of many places of our lives? When there is reproach and stigma to be borne, when there is a choice between the opinions of those about us and our Lord, have we not many times chosen the easy way? While we do not deliberately say: "We will not have this man, we will not obey His voice;" we say this by our actions when we do not go forth and bear the shame of the cross, and of our

Lord. We lie still, and our hearts are continually saying: "How can I! How can I!"

How many times when the Truth of God is at issue, and we have some personal advantage in keeping still, we refuse to stand for the Truth. This is the same as going against it; it is the same as not letting the Lord in when He is standing at the door. The bride did not say she would not let Him in, but she said: "How can I? How can I?" And this is what we say when there is danger of losing the friendship of those whom we love or who would be a personal advantage to us.

"My locks with the drops of the night." This, historically, shows forth our Lord in the garden of Gethsemane, and pictures the agony which He went through there. Who can ever comprehend the suffering and the awful night through which He passed alone before the Father. "He went forward a little, and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from Me. And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground."

Does it mean drops of the literal night? Far from it! His head being filled with dew is not the same as His locks filled with the "drops of the night." Truly was His head filled and wet with the dew; but those drops of the night, which set forth the drops of blood that fell from His face to the ground, who can fathom what they meant of suffering and agony? Though literal darkness came down upon the earth and covered it for three hours, this was not the night that brought those drops of blood upon the face of our precious Lord.

The night that brought forth those night-drops, was the devil letting loose and leading forth the hosts of hell against the King of glory. It was the awful conflict, which went

on between the hosts of light and the hosts of darkness; it was the battalions of hell swinging into line of battle, and the devil moving upon His human instruments to bring about the death of our Lord; it was all this that begot that darkest night the world has ever known, or ever will know. And the one, against whom all the powers of hell were pitted, and upon whom this awful darkness fell, was our dear Lord.

Truly were His locks filled with the drops of the night. Truly was His face marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men.

None but the Father knows the darkness of that night through which our Lord passed, when the powers of darkness came down upon Him so that He sweat great drops of blood. He went through this darkness for you and for me. His locks were filled with the drops of the night for you and for me. He went out alone bearing His cross for you and for me. Are we keeping Him waiting at the doors of our hearts? Are we so wretched and ungrateful as to choose to rest in warmth and comfort within the walls, while He is standing outside, waiting for us to open the door that He may come in and draw us into a closer relation with Himself?

Beloved, let us not deceive ourselves. With every step of closer communion and greater revelation of our Lord, the suffering, reproach and persecution will increase. There will come greater separations from those about us, who, perhaps, have looked up to us as examples. Though it convulses our whole lives and our whole beings to rise up from the place we are in; though we never lie down and rest at ease again, let us cry to Him that His will may be done. Let us yield to the voice of our dear Lord, no matter when He calls us, or how He would lead us.

If we hear His voice and realize that we have been lying down, let us reply: "Yes, dear Lord, I am coming, I will

follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest. I will count the greatest cost as refuse, as I throw open the door of my whole being, that Thou, and Thou alone mayest come in and abide with me and I with Thee; that Thou mayest sup with me and I with Thee. I will obey Thy voice; that as Thou didst suffer for me, so I may suffer with Thee and for Thy sake, as I follow where Thou leadest, as I ever follow Thee."

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE BRIDE AWAKENED. THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE BRIDEGROOM. 5:3-6.

5:3. **"I have put off my garment; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?"** O bride of the Lamb! Is this she who ran with such speed, that her Beloved likened her to the horses in Pharaoh's chariot? Is this she who hastened through the streets and the broad ways of the city, seeking Him whom her soul loved? Is this she who, when she had found Him, clung to Him with such abandonment and would not let Him go? Is this she who has just sat with Him at the betrothal supper, and has gone with Him into the garden of spices? Is this the bride of the Lamb who is answering the voice and the knock of her Beloved and her Betrothed, as she would answer a stranger who was asking for shelter?

She does not see what it means to refuse to open the door to Him, for she is so nearly asleep, that her senses and discernment are clouded. Her own trouble, and what it will mean for her to rise and let Him in, are filling her mind, crowding out the apprehension of the sin she is committing. Her delay in opening the door does not look so heinous to her, for she knows that she loves Him; she would rejoice if He were within. She really desires to have Him within and longs to enter into that closer communion to which He is inviting and urging her.

Dear child of God, for what trifles have you and I repulsed our Lord when He has knocked upon our door and called us to rise up to higher ground? When He has called

us to wait upon Him, and we found that it was hard to enter in, how quickly have we left our knees and gone away. The devil always suggests something we can do for our Lord or for some of His children, which will soothe our consciences when we do not obey His voice. And when we do not open the door and wait for Him to come in, we are lulled to rest because we are doing something for Him. We do not apprehend that He is calling us to get into the place where He can do something for us.

It only needs a few repulses through some trifle or selfish reason, and sleep will prevail. In the end, the bride loses what God is offering her and misses the blessing and the revelation that He is waiting to bring her. The best God has for her, she carelessly lets fall from her indolent and powerless fingers.

5:4. **"My Beloved put in His hand by the hole of the door, and my heart was moved for Him."** For God to stretch forth His hand is always a symbol of dealing and chastening. Her Beloved has called and knocked, but she has not listened nor risen to open unto Him. And now He puts His hand through the hole in the door that He may open for Himself; and He finds that she has not only closed the door, but she has locked it. In those days, they used a device for fastening the door, which could be managed from both without and within; and a hole was made in the door for this purpose.

The Bridegroom is pictured as reaching His hand in to turn the bolt with this wooden device, in order that He may open the door. But He finds the door more securely fastened than by the bolt that can be operated both from the outside and inside. It is a perfect picture of the Lord stretching forth His hand to chasten and convict, to stir up and arouse the slumbering soul. He does it through afflictions or testings, which always drive the devoted soul to the Saviour's breast.

There is nothing that will draw us nearer to our dear Lord than for Him to stretch forth His hand and put it through the doors of our beings. He never forces the door open. The Bridegroom could have broken open the door and entered, and the Lord could break open the doors of our hearts and enter; but He never does this.

He calls and woos us; He knocks through His love, His gentle reproofs, His chidings. He knocks through His goodness and kindness; but when we refuse to open to Him, He stretches forth His hand and chastens, and even scourges if necessary. He puts His hand in the hole beside the door and lays it upon that which fastens the door and keeps Him out. He does not force the door, but He deals with that which is acting as a bolt; He deals so that the true soul hastens to take away whatever has locked the door.

Much of the correction and chastening through which we have passed would not have been necessary if we had listened to the voice of our dear Lord. If the bride had opened the door at once, the Bridegroom would have come in, and she would not have wandered about the streets; she would have escaped the humiliation that she suffered as she went here and there seeking her Lord. Most of us have passed through experiences that have been almost unbearable, because in no other way would we let the Lord draw us to follow after Him; and in no other way could He give us that which He had for us.

There is no grace equal to the resignation and humility that always leads to instant obedience, and to self-effacement. Such resignation does not stop to consider what any one will think or say, but when the Lord speaks, instantly obeys without questioning or repining. And the Lord is so longsuffering that He stands and deals with us until His head is filled with the dew. He talks with us and calls us by precious, endearing terms, reminding us that we are His love, and

that our faces are growing more and more beautiful, and our voices are becoming sweeter to Him each day.

He makes us know that He loves to hear our voices in prayer and would have us pour out our love at His feet. He longs to see our faces turned heavenward and our eyes continually fixed upon Him. When, in these gentle ways, He has tried to persuade us to open to Him so that we may enter into the closer communion, which is God's will for Christ and His bride, if we remain unmoved, He begins to deal with us more severely.

"And my heart was moved for Him." She is fully awake now, though from the first she heard His voice calling her, and heard Him knocking upon the door. She knew His head was filled with the dew and His locks with the drops of the night, but she has been in a kind of half-sleep and has not been moved from her indolence and stupor. When He put His hand in to unbolt the door, her heart was moved for Him. The stretching forth of His hand through the hole of the door, means the dealing and chastening of God, which He puts forth upon her and upon that which is keeping Him out; is symbolized by the "bolt of the door."

Though the gentle means He has used, has had no effect upon her, when He begins to deal, her heart is moved within her. She is fully aroused as He convicts her of her refusal to hearken to His voice, and to enter into the closer communion to which He is calling her; as He begins to deal with every obstacle that keeps her from obeying Him.

Even now, she does not suspect that He will withdraw; this thought has not come to her. She is ashamed that she has lain still and let Him stand outside throughout the night, until His head is filled with the dew, and His locks with the drops of the night. But He has been standing there so long that she expects Him to be waiting there whenever

it pleases her to open the door; and the possibility that He will go away does not even occur to her.

How many times it is thus with us; we are as indifferent as we like; we are as slow as we choose to be; we loiter about and take our time, not caring whether we hasten or not. Our dear Lord is so patient with us and so longsuffering, that we think when we get ready to arise and let Him in, or to go and meet Him, He will still be waiting for us; but we do not always find it so. Though He has not dealt with us after our sins nor rewarded us according to our iniquities, we must remember that He will not always strive neither will He keep His anger forever.

It takes the bride a little time to arise and put on her garment, and gird up her loins. She must get the box of precious myrrh that she may perfume her hands; she must be ready to anoint those weary feet that have stood outside the door all night waiting for her to open to Him. The putting off of the garment when she went to rest, symbolizes the laying aside of the incorruptible apparel of a meek and yielded spirit, and carefully laying away the girdle of Truth, with which she had been girded as she ran after Him when He drew her. It was the girdle of Truth that had sustained her weary steps as she went through the "streets and the broad ways" of the city to find Him (ch. 3:2, 3).

She has not thrown away this precious garment and girdle, but has carefully laid them aside that she may lie down and rest. The robe of humility must needs be laid aside before she could receive the admiration of those who were not near the Lord themselves, but who recognized that she knew His voice. Girdles are only worn by pilgrims and strangers, or when one is running a race. Nothing interferes more with ease, or is more uncomfortable to one who is lying down to rest, than the tight, unyielding girdle of the Truth of God. It will not accommodate itself to indolence

nor to the motions of the flesh and error. Both the garment and the girdle would interfere with the ease of the bride as she lay down to sleep, so she put them aside until she should arise and again begin to hasten after the Lord.

It is not enough to know and believe the Truth, or to have lived it in a great measure in the past. We must put it on more and more perfectly every hour. We must draw the girdle of Truth about our loins more tightly and perfectly; we must see that there is not a place where it is so loose that ends of error, of careless teaching and inconsistent living can hang down and entangle our feet. Our daily lives, with every belief, must be made to conform to the Word of God, and must be held up by His Truth; and very often they are not thus conformed to the Truth because we wear the girdle of Truth so negligently.

God will not overlook any slackness in holding and standing for the Truth of the gospel and of His Word. He commands us to contend earnestly for the Faith once for all delivered unto the saints. Many of God's people look upon this matter as non-essential, but Paul did not so consider it. Just before he was martyred for the sake of this gospel, he commanded Timothy: "The things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

We must know the Truth of God along every line; we must know the gospel of Jesus Christ; and all our steps must be directed and governed by the Word of God. As the girdle supported and made steadfast the athlete in the Grecian games, so must the girdle of Truth support and make steadfast the Christian in the race set before him. We must feed upon the Lamb of God with our loins girded, even as the Jews ate the passover lamb with their loins girded and their staves in their hands.

It will profit nothing if we have the Truth and put it

carefully away in a drawer, where many of God's people keep their theology and beliefs, while we take things easy in our daily living. We must be girded tightly with the girdle of Truth; we must be adorned with the incorruptible apparel with which God alone can clothe the hidden man of the heart. As we do this, we shall be fitly clothed with the beautiful garment of salvation, which will cover us more perfectly, and which we shall fill out more fully as we follow on to know the Lord. Then, with joy shall we take up our cross daily and follow Him, and we shall attain to a place among the overcomers.

The myrrh of the bride is an emblem of the anointing and dealing of the Holy Spirit, together with the deep and bitter repentance, which always follows His dealings. In this place, the myrrh shows forth a repentance that is both fragrant and precious in the sight of God; and which comes from the dealing of the Holy Spirit, who is abiding within. The dropping of myrrh, or "liquid myrrh," always comes forth from an incision made in the tree, therefore it is the purest myrrh. This liquid myrrh is a figure of that abandonment to the working of the Holy Spirit that always comes after humbling one's self and repentance; and is shown forth in prayer and praise, love and humility, poured out at the feet of Christ.

The hand is an emblem of strength and ability to perform. The fingers, with the hand, are symbolic of a person's work and activities. The myrrh upon the bride's hands and fingers shows forth the anointing, and unction, and the moving of the Holy Spirit in her daily living and acts; also the operation of her worship and communion toward her Beloved, which anoints and perfumes every move and action. It is as the cross of Jesus Christ is applied to indolence and indifference, that His myrrh will drop from every act of the life.

If the bride of the Lamb would listen to His voice and open every time He knocked at the door of her heart, the fragrant myrrh would continually drop from her hands and from her fingers. Every word and action of her life would be anointed and would flow with the power and the unction of the Holy Spirit. If her voice were always heard in prayer and adoration, she would ever be ready to open to Him; and she would not need to take time for repentance and preparation when He called her to a higher step.

If she were always walking in the Spirit and under His control, there would be no neglect of the Truth, nor negligence in putting on the garment of humility; there would be no slumber and leakage because the myrrh was left locked up in its box through neglect of prayer and communion. She would ever behold the face of her Beloved, without a cobweb between.

Many of God's children must spend time to get things out of the way, before they can obey the Lord's voice and go to meet Him. Before they can open the door when they hear their Lord knocking, they must stir up the gift within them, by humbling themselves and earnestly going down before God. God would have us ever abiding in the place, where we would not need to make any preparation when our Lord called us to take a higher step; or when He would bring us into a more intimate relation with Himself, and lead us into further chambers which we have not yet entered.

This precious myrrh with which the bride has hastened to anoint herself, and which she has hastily taken that she may anoint the head and the feet of her Beloved, must needs fall upon the bolt of the door; for the "handles of the bolt" is a figure of that which has barred Him out. It may be one thing or another, but whatever has barred the door and shut her Beloved out, will not give way until this myrrh has fallen upon it. In earnest prayer she has gone to God, she

has humbled herself; in contrition has she prevailed until the bolt which has kept her Lord out is removed, and she has opened to her Beloved.

5:6. **"I opened to my Beloved."** Literally: "I myself opened to my Beloved." Christ never forces any door open, He only comes in when we have opened the door. There is no power in hell or upon earth that can prevent us getting all God has for us. Only one person can do this, and that is you or I. He does not force any one against his will, to turn to Him and be saved. He does not force any child of His against his will to press on into His best. Let us remember this when we are praying for the unsaved, and demanding from God the salvation of some person who hates God and deliberately refuses His mercy. Let us remember this when we are crying to God for ourselves or for others, and are not yielding to His dealings. It avails nothing for us to pray great prayers, while we sit entrenched in our flesh, and are given over to indolence and disobedience.

If we would be refreshed by heavenly showers, we must take the steps that will bring us where they are falling. Though the droppings of God's mercy and grace, of His dealings and revelation, have their source in Him, and come from Him alone; though they are ever falling with copious blessings upon all who are where they can receive; only those who go where they are falling, receive refreshment and have their prayers answered. We pray that the Holy Spirit may fully control us. In order to have this prayer answered, we must resist every movement of the flesh and yield to the Spirit. We pray that Christ may be Lord of our lives. If this prayer is answered, we must throw open every door and avenue of our lives to Him. *We* must move out, and *He* must move into every part of our beings and take possession in the fullest sense.

To open the door of our hearts and whole inner being

for Christ to come in, is more than to lie at ease and desire that He were inside. It is more than to listen to His voice and think that it is sweet. It is more than to boast to others that we know His voice, and that He has given us a wonderful revelation of His calling to us. To throw open the door of our whole beings so that He can come in, is to let Him have His way and work His will in our lives without let or hindrance from us. Such abandonment only comes from prayer without ceasing, from communion and separation to Him. To "open the door" is yielding and obedience, through faith, for Christ to come into our hearts and be our all and in all; that He may lead us on, that He may reveal Himself to us, and that our love for Him may be stirred up to a stronger flame by the moving of His love upon us.

If we find that the door of our hearts is closed to our Lord, let us try this way of opening it, and do it quickly. Let us gird up our loins more tightly with His Truth, and more diligently put on the apparel which He has provided for us in Himself. Let us fill our alabaster boxes with the precious myrrh of repentance, of communion and prayer; yielding to the Holy Spirit. With this fragrant anointing upon our hands, and our strength renewed through waiting on the Lord, with all our acts born of the Holy Spirit, let us hunt out every bolt that has barred the door to our Lord.

Before the heavenly strength in our anointed hands, and the operation of our prayers, communion, and abandonment to God, every bolt will fall back, and every door will swing open for the King of glory to come in. No bolt can remain when we turn to Him in deeper adoration, and, by obedience and prayer, stir up the gift within us; when our feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and we have on the whole armor of God; when we lie low at His feet in obedience and humility.

Though the door may not be closed, it often appears too small to let Him in with the greater revelations of Himself and of His Truth. It is not until He comes in in an intimate way, bringing the Truth and the revelation of Himself so that it becomes flesh in us, that we are conscious of Him abiding and dwelling within us. There are wonderful privileges, which God is revealing to us in these last days before the return of our Lord; wonderful knowledge of God and unspeakable relations to our Beloved, which have always been His will, but which He is revealing more clearly as we approach His Coming.

Let us meditate upon this closest of all relations that God has purposed and is carrying into effect between Christ and His bride. Let us cherish the thought in our hearts that we are bespoken to be the wife of the Lamb. If we are true to the end, becoming overcomers through His blood, we shall sit with Him upon His throne.

Are we living as the betrothed of Jesus Christ, the Son of God? Do we believe that He has gone to prepare a place for us? Are we rejoicing that He whom our soul loveth is preparing a place for us among the many mansions in our Father's house? Is it real to you and me that He is coming again to receive us unto Himself? Are we rejoicing that where He is, there we are going to be also, that we may behold His glory? Is it a reality to us that we are not of this world? Or are we living as if it were only a story that we have read and have heard read; a story that is no more real to us than the fiction the world reads and enjoys?

If we are going to live forever with the Lord, and occupy the place that He is preparing for us, we must count all things but loss that we may have all God has for us and partake of all Christ purchased for us upon the cross. If we are going to sit with Him upon His throne, we must go forth to meet Him without the city wall; we must take up our cross daily, following Him and bearing His reproach.

"But my Beloved had withdrawn Himself, and was gone." When she was sleeping, He had knocked; while she was refusing, He had called; but when He had aroused her from this beginning of deadly slumber, He had withdrawn. She little realized what she was doing when she refused to open to Him. She thought He would wait until she had opened the door. In His tender love and faithfulness, He had not left her. He had continued knocking and calling until she was awake, though she had treated Him as a stranger; though she had lain still in her bed of ease, and left Him out in the darkness until His head was wet with night dew, and His locks with night drops.

He had offered her His best, He had come and knocked at the door of her heart, and He had let her see that she was not going on as she ought. She loved Him and had given her love to none other; she knew His voice and loved its sound; she had received answers to her prayers. But her Lord came and made her know that this was not enough, that it was not His will that she should rest upon the experiences and privileges to which she had attained. God's ways are mysterious and wonderful. His presence was at the door while she rejected Him; He communed with her uninterruptedly as she slumbered and hesitated to let Him in, but as soon as she had roused herself, He became silent.

When we have not followed on as we ought, and God begins to deal with us, so that we begin to be convicted and arouse ourselves to repent and to seek His face, let us not be discouraged if He does not meet us as we had expected and hoped. Sometimes He communes with us and pours the oil of His presence upon us when we are in danger of drifting away, that we may be aroused to see our danger. But when we are stirred up to go after Him, it seems we cannot find Him. Thus it was with the bride. She had grieved Him by her indifference and love of ease. Though

He was not angry with her, her Lord knew that she must apprehend her sin and be chastened, or she would commit the same fault again.

Beloved, have you ever heard your Lord's voice calling you to come apart with Him, to leave everything and every one that hindered you and come into a higher place of revelation and separation unto Himself? Have you kept your Lord waiting while you pampered your flesh, or while you did something that *you* wanted to do, instead of doing what He wanted you to do? Have you heard Him chide you because you neglected Him, because you were not giving yourself to prayer and to the Word, because you were not taking up your cross continually and following after Him?

When you have heard His voice in these or other ways, have you risen up eagerly and quickly and hastened to obey? Or have you asked Him to wait until a more convenient season? Did you have some "Christian work," which you felt was very important because some souls were looking to you for help? Did you tell the Lord to wait until you could leave them, or finish what you were doing? Many times, it is so. Not always in words do we tell Him to wait; but we do as the bride is represented as doing. We go on with our "work," or we go on resting and enjoying the admiration of those about us. We are going to respond and obey, we are going to arise and let Him in, but not until a more propitious moment when we have finished what we are doing.

How many times the Lord has called us, and we have rejoiced that He did this; we rejoiced almost as much as though we had listened and obeyed. But when it came to really hearkening, we let the smallest thing hinder or prevent us obeying His voice.

The bride has grieved Him by her indifference. What right has she to keep Him waiting; she, who was once black

as the tents of Kedar and has been taken out of the vineyard of the world; she who was once scorched by the sun and had not kept her own vineyard? What right has she to keep the King of glory waiting, to keep the One waiting who has taken her into His chambers, who has supped with her in the green pastures, who has taken her into the Banqueting House and revealed Himself to her? It is He who sweat drops of blood in the night of His agony, and who has died for her, whom she is refusing entrance.

As soon as she is aroused, He passes on; and she commences to see what she has done. She looks out into the darkness, out into the night which means the absence of the Bridegroom; and it is a much darker night than it would have been if it had not been brought upon her because of her own indolence and selfishness. However many times she calls Him, she hears no sound. Her soul has gone forth when He spoke, but not enough to make her rise up quickly and go to meet Him.

The Lord has stayed near and sent forth His voice and His dealing until she is aroused, for if He had not done this, she might have lapsed into the slumber of death. He knows that as soon as she is fully awakened, she will not fall into slumber again, for the true bride of Christ will not return to sleep after she is really awake. The fact that He is not at the door when she opens it, is an incentive to seek Him more diligently. If the Lord never tested us, we would not go on nearly as fast. The more He has given us, the more He has worked with us, the more He can trust us to seek Him after we are once convicted and awakened.

As long as the bride can commune with her Lord, even through the closed door, she is satisfied with her condition. As long as she can hear His voice calling her to follow more zealously and to enter in more diligently, she fails to realize how she is bound by the bands of self and indifference. But

when she hears His voice no more; when she goes to the door, now thrown wide open, and finds Him not, all the excuses that she has been making to Him and to her own soul, vanish in the concern and dismay that she feels, as she looks out into the darkness of His absence.

There is nothing that will more subtly and completely steal away that which the Lord is offering us, than a spirit of procrastination and indolence. If we really refused to follow our Lord, it would arouse us to the danger we are in; or if we turned our backs upon Him and said, "No" to that which He offers us, we should be alarmed. It is when we are so near Him that our hearts are waking though we are asleep; it is when we are so near Him that we want all He has for us, but are not close enough, and wide awake enough to take what He holds out to us, that we are lulled to sleep by good resolutions. We can see ourselves in that indefinite future, that "Golden Sometime," clothed in, and possessing all He has showed us. This is so deceptive, that we settle ourselves into a little easier position where we can contemplate, between our naps, the delightful picture thus presented.

Our hearts say to us: "Sometime, I will gird my loins more tightly and follow after Him." After loitering in this way, when the Lord does stir us up by chastening and dealing, to really gird up our loins for the race, many times we do not find Him when we start out to enter in.

But the true bride, when she does not find Him, calls and weeps; her heart bleeds. She feels that she must find Him and lay hold upon the skirts of His garments, she must come nigh unto Him even though it is through intense suffering. She will not return to her warm room and her couch and wait for Him to come and seek her, as the indifferent Christian does; but she plunges out into the darkness and into the night to search for Him whom her soul loveth.

Little does she care now whether she soils her feet or not; little does she care about the bed of ease in which she has been resting, or any trouble which it costs her to find her Beloved. Those who have admired her, now despise her. Those who have looked up to her as to one who knew the voice of the Lord, feel resentment as though she had won their admiration by false pretensions, and they now look down upon her. Even those who had been called to go about the city and those who should have been keeping the walls scorn her.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE BRIDE PERSECUTED BECAUSE OF HER ZEAL AND LOVE FOR THE BRIDEGROOM. 5:7-9.

5:7. **"The watchmen that go about the city found me; the keepers of the walls took away my mantle from me."** The words, "watchmen," "shepherds," "keepers of the walls," all have the same meaning; namely, the pastors and teachers whom the Chief Shepherd has made under-shepherds over the sheep. There is a touch of historical coloring in here, which is very precious. It was not the Romans who came out to seize Jesus, it was "a multitude with swords and staves, *from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders;*" or, in other words, "From the watchmen in Israel and the keepers of the walls."

When they led Jesus away to the high priest: "Then came together with Him all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes," and there were two virgins of the bride of the Lamb who followed afar off. The officers from the chief priests who led Him away, would have taken John also, but he fled, leaving his garment in their hands. These minute allusions are not without weight from a prophetic standpoint, when we remember that the Spirit foretold the casting of lots for Christ's vesture, the parting of His raiment among the soldiers; and even the vinegar, which they gave Him to drink. As Peter and John followed the Lord afar off, the watchmen in Israel took away the garment of the one, and smote the other with their accusations.

It was the watchmen and keepers of the walls of the Lord's Vineyard who should have aroused the bride from her slum-

ber, but instead of this, they had soothed her into a deeper sleep by their approval. They were not like the shepherds in the third chapter, whom she had met in her quest for her Lord. They had pointed out the way, and through their help she had found Him whom her soul loved. In this passage which we are now considering, however, the watchmen are portrayed as being backslidden, and in such a condition that they resent the hunger and the repentance of the bride.

It is truly embarrassing for those who are called to lead and tend the sheep, for those who should go before the flock and first partake of every pasture and all the fruit, to have some poor, hungry soul start out and run ahead of the shepherd, and the pasture in which they are staying and keeping the rest of the flock. Nothing will stir up such persecution as this will. The very hunger of an aroused soul is keen conviction to such shepherds, and unless they are humble enough to confess their backslidden condition and join in the search for the Lord, they will persecute and revile the one who has been the cause of this unpleasant experience.

It is not always those who are called to shepherd the flock that go on with the Lord the fastest, although this is God's plan. We can but notice the progress of both the bride and the shepherds in this book. When the bride first cries to the Bridegroom for a nearer approach to Him, He commands her to follow His under-shepherds and feed near their tents. In the third chapter, she remembers her Lord's command and inquires of the watchmen, or shepherds, to direct her to the Lord. But in this place, although they are not unfriendly, the shepherds are not hastening on after the Lord as fast as she is; for it is not until she has passed them, that she finds her Beloved. In the fifth chapter, we find the watchmen make no effort to help her in her quest. At first, no doubt, they try to hinder and dissuade her from her search, and finally they smite and persecute her.

All have had this experience who have kept step with God and walked on with Him, regardless of cost or separations, regardless of those who have been left behind. I remember the times in my own experience, when my precious Lord stirred me up, by calling and knocking, by dealing and chastening. With breaking heart and weary feet, I went out to search for Him and for that which He had made me know was His will for me to have. At first, I went to some of the watchmen, who were hurt and resentful because I had a deeper hunger than they were able to satisfy. They had lulled me to slumber by the seductive music of soothing words, instead of using words that were seasoned with salt. They had assured me we must avoid all fanaticism and extremes; that we must take care we did not "go too far." As though any one could go too far in the search after their Lord! As though there were any extreme that was unbecoming, when it came to love of God and abandonment to the Lord!

When the distressed virgin, who has been aroused and drawn by the dealing of her Lord to go out and hasten after Him, refuses to listen any longer to the platitudes that have helped to put her to sleep; the unfaithful watchmen begin to smite her with their tongues and with their opposition. If she does not listen to the instruction and wisdom that they bring forth to convince her; in order to justify themselves, they will turn against her. To those who do not desire to press on into a deeper relation with their Lord, it is inexplicable that a soul, thoroughly saved and knowing the Lord and His voice, one who has not been guilty of infidelity or letting her love go out to any other, should so disturb herself and those about her.

The rest of the sheep are satisfied. They are resting, and have no thought that there is anything more desirable than that which they are now enjoying; or any pasture more green and nourishing than the one in which they have been lin-

gering so long. When hunger for the Lord increases and absorbs every other consideration, as is here depicted of the bride, it always brings an unrest among the rest of the flock, and reveals the truth concerning those who have the oversight of the sheep. Nothing will more quickly reveal a backslidden condition and leanness of soul in leaders, than even one sheep becoming hungry enough to make an outcry.

The admonitions and advice that such watchmen give, tend rather to hinder than to assist in the search for the Lord, as many of God's children who are keeping pace with Him have experienced. It is useless to point out to such hungry souls that there is a great demand for so-called Christian work or charitable activities. It is superfluous to urge more diligence in prayer, faithfulness in attending services, and zeal in testimony, as a remedy for their distress. All of these suggestions were tried and found wanting before they were given, and before the bride reached the condition in which she revealed her distress to those about her.

It is truly pitiful to watch the eager efforts made by one who has been drawn to run after a receding and disappearing Lord. Only a short while ago, she could not bring herself to arise and let Him in when He stood outside the door; she left Him there until His head was wet with the dew, and His locks with the drops of the night. She shrank from soiling her feet; she did not want to arouse herself nor take the trouble of going to the door and unlocking it that He might come in.

But now she cares not who hears her outcries, she heeds not the remonstrances of the indolent watchmen, who try to silence or subdue her voice. They would constrain her to behave more seemly, for the sake of the sleeping and decorous sheep around her, but she is undaunted. Her outcries increase, and she continues her quest, not caring who

is disturbed or awakened if she can satisfy her hungry heart and find the One for whom she is seeking.

It brings deep and uncomfortable conviction to leaders when they see that the Great Shepherd of the sheep has Himself come and awakened some soul whom they have allowed to fall into slumber; and whom they have soothed when any restlessness, caused by conviction, has arisen. Many of God's children have allowed themselves to be thus soothed and deceived by those whom they looked upon as leaders. How our hearts have been saddened as we have left behind us those who were dear and closely associated with us in the Lord's work.

At every upward step, and with every deeper experience, we have left behind many of those who had been walking with us. The faster we run after the Lord, and the more zealous we are to enter into that which He has revealed to us, the faster these separations come. And the heart-sickening phase of these separations is, that those who fall back into slumber and are left behind always persecute and take away the veil of those who determinedly go on with the Lord.

The oil of myrrh, with which the bride has anointed herself before going to open the door for her Lord, is manifest to all. Its bitterness shows forth her repentance and deep humility, its fragrance proclaims the zeal and care with which she has prepared to go through with the Lord. All can discern that this moving upon her is not a slight arousing from slumber; a stirring in sleep, which many of the people of the Lord have and think that it is a real going on. This is a stirring up of the whole being into hunger and yearning for the Lord, and into repentance because of the slumber that has caused her separation from Him.

Her conviction over her half-heartedness greatly embarrasses those who have charge of the flock; and they do not know how to deal with her. Therefore they cast reflections

upon her sincerity, they attribute this disturbance which she has caused among the flock, to emotionalism and a desire to be seen. They would have it appear that she is making this commotion in order to be seen of men; that she thinks she is better than the rest of the sheep, or even than the pastors and teachers themselves.

They make it appear that they have been deceived in believing she knew the Lord's voice, for here she is running to and fro seeking Him; here she is in more distress than one who had never known Him. Surely this cannot be the bride; she cannot have had a close enough relation to the Bridegroom to be betrothed to Him. Her very concern and distress discredit her claim to being the bride. She has no right to be wearing a veil and passing herself off as one in so close a relation to the Lord. If it were so, she would not need to be searching for Him, but would ever be near Him and in close touch and communion with Him.

No greater indignity can be offered an oriental woman than to take away her veil. In those days, and even now in some countries, it is only harlots that go unveiled. The watchmen taking away the bride's veil is a symbol of persecution, misrepresentation, and of the slurs cast upon her zeal and relation to the Lord. Because of this persecution and misunderstanding, because of the veil being torn away from her condition and distress, she is urged to greater love and fervency in seeking Him whom her soul loveth. Never before has she loved Him as she loves Him now when she is suffering for His dear sake; never has He been so sweet to her. Never before has the vision of her dear Lord been so beautiful and precious as now, when she is looked upon with suspicion and with scorn by the watchmen, and by those sheep who always follow the shepherds, no matter where they lead.

With the true child of God, and with all who are hungry

and determined to get God's best, there is nothing that increases their hunger and abandonment like persecution. All of us who have been hungry and have diligently sought God, have been through this experience. The harder the wind of persecution, adversity and misunderstanding blew upon the flame of our love for our Lord, the brighter it became; and the faster it consumed everything that would obstruct its path. With what determination have we sought to find Him in a deeper way; with what devotion have we cried for a greater revelation of Himself. With what fixity of purpose have we pressed on; hurt at first by the opposition and slurs that met us from those who once claimed to love us. With what a cutting loose did we run after Him; looking in every place where He might be found, searching every spiritual worship and service in which we hoped that He might reveal Himself.

It is like the North Wind of God's dealing and conviction; as the opposition increases, the roots of our spiritual lives go deeper and grasp the living Rock more tenaciously. Those things that seemed important when the bride was lying at ease on her bed, have dwindled away and faded out of sight. No longer does it gratify her that she knows the voice of her Lord, or that others admire her because she knows His voice. No longer does she care whether her feet are soiled with the reproach that is cast upon her as she arises and seeks Him. No longer does she shrink from revealing to those about her, that she is not as far along as they had thought she was. No longer does she think of her garment that she put off, nor does she find satisfaction in the myrrh which is dropping from her fingers.

Her feet are torn by many a stone against which she has stumbled and wounded herself during her distressed search. Her fingers are bruised by knocking upon many closed doors that would not open and disclose her Beloved. The garment

of modesty and humility, which she had laid aside as she lay at ease, and put on when she arose to open to her Lord, has been snatched away by the hands of the unfaithful watchmen. In the place of the tender voice of the Chief Shepherd calling: "Open to Me, My sister, My love, My dove, My undefiled;" the watchmen, and those who were entrusted with the keeping of the walls, smote her with their tongues and accusations.

Her feet are not only soiled with dust, but are covered with mire and mud as she hastens about the streets; but none of these things move her. With every step, her desire has increased; with every rebuff, her fervent love and adoration have burned brighter. She never loved her Lord when she heard His voice through the closed door, and at a distance, as she loves Him now when she does not hear His voice at all. Before she had had this experience, she could not have given this description which she gives of her Beloved. The path has been bitter and hard over which she has passed to the abandonment and devotion that now consume her; but she would not have it otherwise.

"I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my Beloved, that ye tell Him, that I am sick from love." Although this is similar to her appeals to the daughters of Jerusalem in the second chapter, it is not at all the same. The touching humility with which she assumes that it is possible for them to find her Beloved before she does, is most beautiful.

There has not been a time heretofore, when she would have admitted that those who knew not her Beloved, might find Him before she did. When she was in the Banqueting House, she was sick of love because He had brought her into such a relation to Himself that it seemed she could bear no more. Her heart was filled with rapture and joy as she leaned upon His left hand of providence and support, and knew that His right hand was always outstretched in her

behalf; as she saw floating over her His beautiful banner, "Love."

But now she is sick with love because of His absence, and because of her love and longing for Him. Her love and abandonment have increased, being stirred by the contrition, which neglect of her Lord has aroused. Though absent, He is more real and beautiful to her than He has ever been before; she is fainting with the love which fills her heart, and with her longing for His presence. Her recent indolence has blighted her confidence and self-satisfaction. Not only has she lost the assurance that was hers because she knew His voice; but in self-abasement, she questions whether even those who know Him not may not find Him before she again beholds Him and comes into His presence.

How precious are the drawings of our dear Lord! His ways are as far above our ways as the heavens are above the earth. Those who are half-hearted and have never known the devotion that has filled the hearts of the martyrs, the love that has lost all for His dear sake, will never understand the experiences of those who are following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. The yearning and longing of a heart that Christ is drawing, is often keener pain than the most poignant physical suffering. As the sun draws the moisture from the bosom of the ocean, so does our Beloved draw the longings of our hearts up to Himself. The earth fades away, every desire and interest sinks out of sight, and life itself is worth nothing, as our whole beings stretch out and cry out for our dear Lord.

Not when we are half-hearted or when we are partly backslidden, do these cords of everlasting, divine love lay hold upon us. But when we are following Him the closest; when we are loving Him the most fervently; when our names are cast out as evil for His sake, then do we feel His mighty,

eternal, tender love drawing, drawing, constraining us. With Paul, we would far rather depart and be with Christ, yet would we abide if thereby He may be glorified. All desires, all motives, are swallowed up in the one great heart-cry, which fills out whole beings: "Let Christ be magnified in our bodies, whether by life, or by death."

5:9. **"What is thy Beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? What is thy Beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so adjure us?"** There is nothing that will create hunger in the hearts of those who do not know the Lord, and yet who are not fighting Him, like beholding the unconscious humility and consuming hunger of one who has had a deep relation and experience with Him. Such love and devotion convince them that the One thus adored, must be different from all others, and than they had thought. Their desire is aroused to know why the bride is consumed with this great love. They would learn how her Beloved differs from others, and a hunger is beginning to stir in their own bosoms.

They question her as to what her Beloved is more than any other beloved. They would know in what way He is more than others; they would know the power and the charm that can draw her love and her whole being into such a search after Him. They have seen how the watchmen have beaten her, how they have taken away her veil; they have seen the indignities which this hunger has brought upon her. They have also seen that, far from being hindered and turned aside by all she has suffered, she is unmoved, and her love and zeal have only been increased thereby.

Oh, how few of God's children have enough love and eager devotion for the Lord, to arouse even the curiosity of those about them! How few of us, after holding a place of some prominence in the esteem of those about us because we have known God, have been humble enough to arise when

we have been lulled to sleep. How few have gone out to search for their Lord before all those who have thus esteemed them and have continued after their names are dishonored and their motives and sincerity questioned. How many are unmoved when those who are convicted because of their zeal, hint that they have obtained the esteem of others by false pretenses; or that their present zeal and distress are but a pretense.

Dear child of God, have your love and hunger for the Lord gone out in such abandonment that it has aroused the questioning of those who are watching you? Have you counted all things as light afflictions, and rejoiced that God makes the hardest things and the most bitter persecution work for you? Have you looked upon them as the instruments of God, which begin to work for you more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory?

As soon as those opposing and maligning you, begin to smite you with their tongues, have you been unmoved and unretarded in your quest? When they make it appear that you are making all this outcry to attract attention to yourself, and not with a sincere purpose, have you called all these things "light afflictions" and rejoiced that they are working for you? Have you kept your eyes so fixed upon Jesus, that you have looked only upon the things that are not seen, and have lost sight of those things that are seen?

We never know how those about us that are not fighting God, are watching our lives to see if there is a reality in the power and attraction of Christ. Those in our homes know how close we are walking to the Lord; those who are touching our lives know whether we really feel a hunger for Jesus Christ, whether we are really running after Him, whether we are really humble; or whether all of this is only in our words and testimonies.

The bride, in the Song of Solomon, is absorbed in her

Lord and in the desire to overtake Him. She longs to pour out her love to Him, she longs to prove that her indifference in letting Him in was not because of real lack of love. She is undeterred by aught through which she passes; and this, with the humility that inquires of the least likely persons and seeks Him in the humblest places, has aroused a conviction in those who are watching her. They are convinced there must be something about her Beloved different from all others, for Him to thus move her; so they question her, in order that they may know what this mighty drawing and keeping power is. They begin to desire to know Him; they would taste of the sweetness which they discern she has experienced.

In the tenth verse of chapter five begins the description that the bride gives of her Beloved. It is most touching and marvelous. As we study this wonderful book and compare our attainments and condition with the experiences of the bride, which are here set forth, we can but see the great shortage that confronts us in many places. It is not to feed and satisfy our imagination that God has given us a description of Christ and His bride, and the eternal love that binds them together.

The Spirit has portrayed the vital and mysterious relation between them, together with the experiences through which the bride shall pass, in order to stir us up to greater zeal. He calls us to measure up to that which is set forth as the distinguishing characteristics of the bride of the Lamb. And He has made it so plain, that we shall be inexcusable if we do not hasten to yield to Him and count all things but loss that we may be all He requires in the bride of His Son.

CHAPTER XXX

CHRIST THE SLAIN LAMB, PREËMINENT, AND THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH. 5:10, 11.

5:10. **"My Beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand."** As the bride continues her search, the flame of her zeal burns brighter; the faster she hastens through the streets to find Him, the more wonderful He appears to her soul. In her marvelous description of her Beloved, she mentions, first of all, the combined, though contrasted colors, "white and red." To a superficial reader, this might signify only health and beauty.

Let us continually bear in mind that the daughters of Jerusalem did not ask for a *description* of her Beloved. They inquired in what He *differed* from, or was more than another beloved. They asked concerning the distinguishing features that belong to Him alone, and by which they may recognize Him, even in a multitude. From the question asked and the motive in asking it, we see at once that, "white and ruddy," do not have the significance of "health" when used by the bride to describe the Bridegroom.

These two colors, which the bride mentions first, make her Beloved different from, and more than every other beloved. They have the first place, and well they may when we know their meaning, for they are the most important of all. They, above all, make the Christ of God different from, and more than all others. They, more than all else, make Him the only fruitful Tree, the only Apple Tree in all the forest of the sons of men. These two colors distinguish Him and mark Him out before all eyes; and because of which,

every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The meaning of the word, "white," is "dazzling, bright, illuminated by the sun, sunny." Dazzling white, as the brightest sunlight. The meaning of the word, "ruddy," is "red; to show blood, to dye or make red." The one name above all other names, by which the Christ of God is known, is "the Lamb." This is the name by which He is known as the Sacrifice of God. John the Baptist calls Him: "The Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." It is to the pure, spotless Lamb of God that all the sacrifices of the Jewish worship pointed, and whom they foreshadowed.

It is so wonderful and increasingly precious to remember that the word, "Lamb," is always applied to Jesus in connection with His sacrifice and with His marriage. In Revelation, we are not told that *Christ* is in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures and elders; but we are told that *a Lamb* stood there as though it had been slain. Here is brought forth the "white and the red," of the spotless slain Lamb. We are not told that *Christ* is the light of the Heavenly City, but *"The Lamb* is the light thereof."

Christ's name, "Lamb," is also His nuptial name. Nowhere do we read of the "wife of Christ." God would have our affections linger about this precious sacrificial, and (through the sacrificial) nuptial name of His Son. Though "The Lamb" and "Christ" are both names of our precious Lord, each name shows forth a different office and work of the one Person. The word, "Christ," shows forth the Son of God as the Anointed One, or the Messiah; and describes His office from God and toward God, as the Redeemer of the world. The word, "Lamb," signifies His office and relation to usward, as the One who bears away the sin of the world; and who has purchased unto Himself all that will believe upon His Name.

In Rev. 19:7, we are told: "Rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready." Christ, the Lamb of God, was slain as the Sacrifice of God; and it was through His death, He purchased to Himself His wife. How fitting it is, therefore, that she should be called "The Lamb's wife," rather than the wife of Christ; although she is referred to as the bride of Christ. Her name should be ever held up in connection with Christ in His sacrificial work, through which alone she could become His wife. In Rev. 19:9, we are told: "Blessed are they that are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb."

So we see that this precious Name, "The Lamb," is the name that is His as the Sacrifice of God and is also His nuptial Name. His sacrifice, and that alone, made the marriage possible; and only through this could He have a wife. The "white" is the color of the Lamb, which must be without spot or blemish. The color is the symbol of Christ's pure humanity. The characteristics of the other meaning of "white," namely, "dazzling, illuminated and shining as the sun," were literally manifested in the transfiguration of Christ on the mount. We are told in Matt. 17:2 that, "He was transfigured before them; and His face did shine as the sun, and His garments became white as the light." In the ninth chapter of Mark, we are told that "His garments became glistering," which, in the Greek, means: "To lighten forth, flash forth like lightning."

Within that form that was marred more than the sons of men, dwelt glory ineffable. As He prayed upon the Mount of Transfiguration, He opened a little way the robe of humanity with which He had covered Himself when He came down to earth, and His majesty and glory burst forth. None can overlook the precious significance in here, when this Scripture is compared with the clause that we are now con-

sidering in the Song of Solomon. The bride declares that her Beloved is "white," or that He is dazzling, white as the light, shining as though illuminated by a mighty sun.

One virgin of the bride never forgot the first glimpse he had of his Beloved on the way to Damascus. In Acts 26:13, we have his words to those who inquired concerning his zeal and love for his Beloved, and who questioned why his Beloved was different from another beloved. "At midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from Heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining around about me and them that journeyed with me." And in the twenty-third verse, Paul quotes the prophets and Moses as saying: "The Christ must suffer, and how that He first by the resurrection of the dead should proclaim *light* both to the people and to the Gentiles." Here we have a precious setting forth of the "white and red" by the beloved Apostle Paul. In many other portions of the epistles do we have these distinguishing and contrasting colors, where the death and sufferings of Christ are spoken of, together with His glory.

Not only is He white, but He is red. This color sets forth His work that He did as the spotless Lamb of God. According to the meaning in the original language, the word, "ruddy" is closely connected with blood and is only produced by blood. Our hearts immediately turn to that precious portion of the First Epistle by Peter (ch. 1:18, 19), "Knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot (which is the "white"), even the blood of Christ" (which is the "red"). Before our spiritual vision appears the pure, white Lamb of God, sprinkled with the bright red of His own blood and standing as though He had been slain, "In the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders" (Rev. 5:6).

"Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?" "Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winevat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was no man with me." . . . "I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold; therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me." Truly were the garments of our Lord dyed with the red, and He alone is marked out by these two distinguishing colors, "white and ruddy." The red upon Him is His own blood which was shed for many, through which He redeemed fallen humanity, and with which He bought unto Himself, and provided for the perfecting of those who should be in the bride.

In Heaven or upon earth, none other wears these colors, excepting Him who is the spotless Lamb of God. The angels and archangels of God, the cherubim and seraphim are pure and white; they are bright and dazzling, but they can never know through experience, the power and meaning of Christ's blood. The "red" does not appear upon them. They look down upon this wonderful thing that God is doing, desiring to inquire into it. The martyrs have shed their blood for Jesus' sake, and while they are white and spotless through His worthiness, they have no whiteness of their own. Their blood could never appear before God as the blood of a sacrifice, nor could it avail to redeem one soul.

Who can fail to see the deep meaning and significance in these colors that characterize the bride's Beloved above every other beloved? Though He was pure and white, and within His human body dwelt the glory of God, if the red were not upon Him, the white would not avail to redeem humanity. The prints of the nails in His hands and in His feet, which are a sign of the red, will mark Him throughout eternity. The redeemed shall also be a trophy of this red, which contrasts in so startling a manner with the white. There

was no sin in Him, yet were His garments dyed, and His blood was shed. There was the white of His sinless human nature, and there was the bright, dazzling white of His divinity. But that which makes the white so precious and beautiful, is the contrasting color, the red, that appears upon Him and upon Him alone; the color showing forth His sacrifice and shed blood.

When the disciples saw Him after His resurrection, they saw Him white, beautiful and Godlike; but in those hands that had broken the bread for them, in those hands that had been stretched forth in tender love to heal and rescue, to soothe and comfort, they beheld the marks of the wounds through which had come forth the red. In those feet that had so ofttimes been weary, that had been worn and tired as He traveled about doing His Father's will and accomplishing the work He had given Him to do, they saw the prints of the nails from which had come forth the red.

In that precious side, over the heart that had loved a sin-cursed world enough to die for it, over the heart that had been pierced, that had broken, and from out of which came blood and water, they saw the print of the spear. They saw the print of the cruel nails and spear in the hands, the feet, and the side, from out of which came forth the bright red, that color, which with the white, marks and distinguishes the Beloved of the bride from all other gods and from every other beloved.

Child of God, do we forget the white and the red of our precious Lord? Are we so taken up with the dazzling white, that we forget that without the red (which is the color of His death), His coming to this earth would have availed nothing? How our hearts should love these colors that our Lord alone wears, and by which He alone is known among the hosts of Heaven and by the Redeemed.

When we read in Revelation that it is given to the bride

to array herself in "fine linen, bright and pure, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints," let us apprehend that we, too, must be arrayed in the garment that Christ has provided for us at such a cost. We, too, must be white and dazzling; we, too, must so put on Christ that the white of the Beloved shall appear and be manifested upon us. Not only that, but the bride washes her robe and makes it white in the blood of the Lamb; thus does the red and white appear upon her who is the body of Christ.

But with her it is different. The "white and red," which mark Him out from all others, are His own spotless humanity with His glorious divinity, and His own blood, which He shed as a ransom for many. The white garment of the bride is not *her* spotlessness, but it is the righteousness of God in Christ, which clothes her as she puts Him on. The blood with which she cleanses her garments, is the blood that He shed when He hung upon the cross and died for her.

O precious Lamb of God, help us to yield, that through that work which Thou hast done, we, as members of Thy body, may ever show forth Thy colors, wearing them before the eyes of all who behold us. May we apprehend that Thou didst put on the "white" of Thy spotless humanity, in order that Thou mightest die and thus put on the "red" of Thy sufferings and death. Help us to so partake of Thy death and put on the "red," which is the precious symbol of Thy death and shed blood, that the spotless "white" of Thy life shall be manifested upon us to the glory of God the Father.

"And I saw the Heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He that sat thereon called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. And His eyes are a flame of fire, and upon His head are many diadems; and He hath a name written which no one knoweth but He Himself. And He is arrayed in a garment sprinkled with blood: and His name is called The Word of God" (Rev. 19:11-15).

"The chiefest among ten thousand." In the original, the meaning of "the chiefest" is "to raise a flag; to be conspicuous because of banners that have been set up; to be conspicuous because of being marked out by banners; a standard bearer." The number "ten" signifies an indefinitely large number; and "thousand" signifies an infinite, vast and innumerable number. If the infinitely vast number, symbolized by "thousand," should be multiplied indefinitely, symbolized by "ten," and the result represented an innumerable host of the greatest and mightiest archangels in Heaven with all the renowned who have ever been upon the earth, He alone among them all would be found to have even one banner. He alone would be conspicuous by the banners that He has set up, by the banners of the victor, which ever float over His head.

It was He who despoiled the principalities and powers in the heavenly places; it was He who made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. It was He who paralyzed the devil, who is the prince of the power of the air, and brought him to naught through death. None ever carried away a banner from our Beloved. All His foes in the heavens and upon earth are chained to His chariot wheels; and He moves on triumphantly, victor over all. He sweeps the vanquished along to the end, where all things shall be put under His feet, and His victory shall be manifested in Heaven and upon earth.

He alone is conspicuous. All others look alike beside Him; all others dwindle into nothingness as He appears, and the banners that He has set up, are discerned. Not only has He set up all the banners that have ever been set up in Heaven and upon earth, but if we trust Him, He is continually setting up banners for us. We set them up in His Name, but this is equivalent to Him setting them up through us, for "In His Name" means that we conquer through our union with Him and as members of His body.

God has chosen us IN HIM, and we are made alive IN HIM. We are new creatures IN HIM and are to walk IN HIM as we received Him, rooted and builded up IN HIM and established in our faith. We become the righteousness of God IN HIM, we are established IN HIM, and can do all things IN HIM that strengtheneth us. God always leads us in triumph IN HIM, making us a sweet savor of Christ unto God. IN HIM, we have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places; as we abide IN HIM, we are made complete IN HIM who is the Head of all principalities and powers. And we are made more than conquerors THROUGH HIM that loved us.

It is as we realize upon the vital union which God has put between Christ, who is the "Chiefest of ten thousand," and us, who are the members of His body, that this mighty Conqueror enables us to set up banners through the power of His work upon Calvary. Thus is He glorified.

To each virgin that will be in the bride of Christ, the sweetest of all the victories that He has won, is the victory that He won over her own soul. The capture and captive that brings the most joy to her heart is the conquest He won over her as He went out and took her captive through His love, and with chains of His everlasting love bound her to Himself. The banner for which she praises God the most, is His banner, which He set up in her life when He forever took her captive and made her His love slave. In all this, her heart rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Sweeter than all else are the chains of her Beloved, which she wears with holy pride and exultant joy. And when her eyes are anointed, she can ever discern, floating over her, His own peculiar banner, bearing His name, "Love." Though the way is hard and the night is dark, she can see it gleaming, shining through the darkness; and her heart rejoices

that though all hell is arrayed against her, under the protection of His banner, she is safe.

Our Beloved is many times grieved when He gives us opportunities to set up banners in His Name. Through us, He has planned to add to His banners and glorify His Name, and we often let the enemy capture the banners that our Lord has the same as given into our hands. If we could only see this as it is, we would eagerly buy up every opportunity to win the banner, which He holds out to us with every testing and temptation. When we do not come out victoriously through living faith in our identification with Him in His death and resurrection, the enemy captures the banners, and we rob God of His glory.

It is so precious to remember that at each of these opportunities, we first put on the red by partaking with Him in His death, by reckoning ourselves dead in Him; and then we put on the white in newness of life through His resurrection. And every time we do this by the working of our faith, we are given another banner to be raised in His Name and to His glory. For it is He who does it all, and to whom all the glory is due. "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O mighty One, Thy glory and Thy majesty. And in Thy majesty ride on prosperously, because of truth and meekness and righteousness: and Thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things" (Ps. 45:3, 4).

5:11. **"His head is as the most fine gold."** It is God who has made Him the Head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all (Eph. 1:23). It is God who purposed that in Him should all things be created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; and in Him all things consist. It is God who has made Him the head of the church; who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things He might have the preëminence (Col. 1:16-18).

The gold is always symbolic of the divine, and here it is an emblem of Christ's divinity, and of the Godhead: "For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and in Him ye are made full" (Col. 2:9). The bride's Beloved is the God of Heaven and earth. Though upon Him appear the precious and significant colors, "white and red," symbolic of His pure humanity, and the work which He did upon the cross; above all this shines forth the gold of His Deity. This appears in the head, which is an emblem of authority, power and supremacy. His authority comes from the Godhead, and all He does is with this supreme authority. He was not sent of men, neither was He chosen by the archangels. He was chosen and sent by God, and He was God; and the head of most fine gold shows all of this forth in a most precious and reassuring way.

Not only does the head of gold represent the authority in which Christ is clothed, and by which He came and wrought His finished work upon the Cross of Calvary; but it is also an emblem that He is the Head of the church. With Him is supreme authority to direct and carry out all things that God has planned concerning His body, the church. Not only is He the Head of the church, as the one who is supreme and the ruler over all things; but He is the vital, living Head of every redeemed soul, and the one from whom comes all life and power to every member of His body. He is the one who works through each member to the glory of God; and He is the one who works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure.

"His locks are bushy, and black as a raven." As the head of most fine gold is a symbol of Christ's divinity, so the locks, which are bushy (or wavy and curly) and black as a raven, are a symbol of Christ's glorified humanity. The symbol of authority appears again in the short hair; His wavy, short hair being in contrast to the long, flowing hair

of the bride. Short hair is always a sign of authority and headship, and long hair is the sign of subjection. Thus we see that while the head of pure gold is an emblem of the Deity of Christ, the short, bushy hair sets forth His authority as Head of the church, or of the bride. This is confirmed by the bride's hair being long and flowing, showing forth her subjection to Him as her glorious Head.

Christ's head wears no token of submission to any creature; He came as the servant of God and did His will, accomplishing all that was given Him to do. But only to God was He in subjection, and that of His own free will. The glory and equality, which He had with God from the beginning, were not taken from Him; He laid them aside and took upon Himself the form of a servant, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. "Wherefore also God highly exalted Him, and gave unto Him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11). There is no veil upon His head, but His is the uncovered head of authority, and the bushy locks of manhood are also His.

The color of the hair indicates the eternal youth of the Beloved, the Jesus who will never grow old. The Spirit describes Jesus Christ in Ps. 110:3, 4: "Thou hast the dew of thy youth, a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." He never saw corruption, as do all other human beings who pass through death. He was the firstfruit from among the dead; and because He was raised from the dead and did not see corruption, there shall be a resurrection of all the dead.

Jesus Christ was crucified in the prime of life, and was the only man who never saw nor felt the decay of age, through

which all human beings pass who live out their allotted time. His strength was unabated when: "By oppression and judgment He was taken away." "He was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of My people to whom the stroke was due" (Isa. 53:8). In Revelation, He is represented as the Ancient of Days, with "hair as white as white wool, white as snow" (Rev. 1:14). It is as the Ancient of Days, He is described in Daniel 7:9. "I beheld till thrones were placed, and one that was Ancient of Days did sit: His raiment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool." All of these descriptions perfectly harmonize with the different aspects of the character and work of Christ.

As the God who inhabits Eternity, He wears the white hair, which is the mark of the "Ancient of Days." As the glorified Man Christ Jesus, He wears the black bushy hair of the perpetual life of man who has put on immortality. When we see Him we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is; we shall live with Him forever. Throughout endless ages, we shall live with Him who is the Ancient of Days, with Him who is now at the right hand of God in His glorified humanity, and who is the first-born among many brethren.

CHAPTER XXXI

CHRIST'S BEAUTY AS THE SON OF GOD AND THE SON OF MAN. 5:12-14.

5:12. **"His eyes are like doves beside the water brooks, washed with milk and fitly set."** The eye is the figure of knowledge and understanding, and here is portrayed the eye of Him who sees all things, and from whom nothing can be hid. The tender compassion of God is shown in the description which is here given of the eyes of Christ. How it moves our hearts when we apprehend that the eyes, which are described in Daniel and Revelation as a flame of fire, are as doves standing by full streams when they look upon those whom He has redeemed. They truly stand by full streams of everlasting love and blessing; they are bathed in the milk of God's Word, in tenderness and in infinite compassion, which abound toward us. The compassion of Jesus Christ is infinite, His tenderness is unfathomable, His longsuffering endureth forever. His eyes are pure and holy as doves that have washed all dust and spots away at the water brooks and at the full streams.

His eyes are "fitly set," there is no obliquity in them. The eyes of our Beloved are tender and loving when as the Saviour, He looks upon us; they are gentle and compassionate when they look upon those who love and are following Him, even though their steps are faltering, and though they may stumble sometimes. But the same eyes will be a flame of fire when He comes to judge the world, and looks upon those who have done Him despite and have despised His grace. Even with those who are following hard after Him, His eyes, which are

so tender and compassionate, are piercing and quick to discern all things, however they may be hidden away.

Do we realize that the pure, gentle eyes of our Beloved are looking down into our hearts continually; that they are beholding and trying us moment by moment? Do we rejoice that the eyes of our Beloved see all things, and nothing can be hidden from Him? There is no creature that is not made manifest in His sight. Do we feel deep satisfaction that all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do?

Many times God's people are found in the attitude that the sinners hold toward God. With their actions and in their hearts, although they may not say it with their mouths, "They say, Jehovah will not see, neither will the God of Jacob consider." But "Woe unto them that hide deep their counsel from Jehovah, and whose works are in the dark, and that say, who seeth us?" Truly, "Jehovah knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity." It is appalling and instructive to observe in others and in ourselves, the attitude we have concerning the things in our lives that are unworthy. If they are hidden away from man, we feel secure; and the fact that Jehovah sees them, seems to escape our notice.

"Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising; Thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou searchest out my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Jehovah, Thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid Thy hand upon me." (Ps. 139: 1 ff.)

That which is whispered in the chamber, is literally shouted from the housetop. Especially have we seen this fulfilled when that which was whispered, was spoken against God's chosen ones, and therefore against God.

There is not a word in our tongue, but Jehovah seeth and knoweth it altogether; not only that which is on the surface,

but all that, consciously or unconsciously, is hidden behind the words spoken. Not only our words are known, but His eyes discern our thoughts afar off. Before they come near enough to our consciousness for us to discern them, they have been discerned by the eyes of Him with whom we have to do; and they have been found pleasing or wanting, as the case may be.

When we entertain and nurture unworthy thoughts, envious thoughts, and thoughts injurious to others, if we have not voiced them, we believe that they are not known to any but ourselves. We are saying in our hearts: "Jehovah will not see, neither will the God of Jacob consider." But "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see? . . . Jehovah knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity" (Ps. 94:9, 11). Even *our thoughts are heard in Heaven.*

5:13. **"His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as banks of sweet herbs."** The cheeks represent the whole visage, and are the seat of beauty and sweetness. From time to time, we have meditated upon the spices and sweet herbs in connection with the Jewish worship, also in connection with Christ and His bride. As we recall their meaning, we see the precious significance in the Bridegroom's cheeks being as a bed of spices, and as banks of sweet herbs. The incense for the temple worship was made of equal parts of sweet spices, symbolic of the preciousness and acceptableness of Christ. Every pang of suffering that He suffered in carrying out the will of God, was sweet incense before the face of God. Every affliction, unto the pouring out of His life, was well-pleasing unto God.

It was when the Jews buffeted Him, when they smote Him with the palms of their hands, mocking and deriding Him, that His cheeks were as a bed of spices and as banks of sweet herbs before the face of Him whose will He came to do. It

was when the Roman soldiers took Him into the prætorium and clothed Him in a purple robe, when they platted a crown of thorns and put it upon His head; it was when they spat upon Him and smote Him on the head with the reed, that the spices of that precious face sent forth fragrance to the Father.

God would have the face of Jesus Christ enshrined in the hearts of those whom He redeemed with such suffering and indignity. He would have His face sweet "As a bed of spices, as banks of sweet herbs" to every virgin of His bride. When those who love their Lord with their whole hearts, behold in vision that visage that was so marred more than any man, they can smell the sweetness of those spices and sweet herbs, for they know His face was marred for their sakes.

From every place upon His precious face and head that was smitten by the rod, sprang up eternal plants of spices and sweet herbs. From every blow of the hands of those who hated Him arose terraces of sweetness unto God. From every stroke of the scourge upon His beloved form arose eternal fragrance before God. Truly were the spices "beaten small" with our dear Lord; but from the beating with rods and spitting, from the smiting and scourging, His face arose: "A bed of spices and banks of sweet herbs." And thus shall it ever be before God and before man.

We find not only the above meaning in these words concerning our Lord's cheeks, but the anointing of the Holy Spirit was upon Him continually. The presence of God so covered Him and appeared upon His face, that not until His hour came could any of those who hated Him lay a hand upon Him to take Him. Many times, "they sought to take Him," but He passed through their midst; "And no man laid his hand upon Him because His hour was not yet come." (John 7:30, 44; 10:39, etc.) As the people looked upon that face, His enemies were struck with awe and fear, and His followers were filled with worship and adoration. The

same face that kindles within our hearts passionate love and devotion, strikes terror into the hearts of those who do not love the Lord.

Truly are His cheeks like beds of spices to those who love and adore Him, to those who remember the despite which was done to that matchless face. Every blow, every indignity that He suffered, has brought to us only sweetness and redemption. How we rejoice that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, has dawned upon us; and that God has sent the light to shine out of darkness and into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

It is in the face of Jesus Christ that we see God, it is from the face of Jesus Christ that we behold the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. His face is like a heavenly garden that has born eternal flowers in our souls; it is like beds of spices that fill our lives with fragrance, and brightness, and joy, until we exclaim with the bride in the Song of Solomon: "His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as banks of sweet herbs."

"His lips are as lilies, dropping liquid myrrh." It is the red lily that is here referred to, which is the symbol of health and purity. All the words that came from the lips of Jesus Christ, were full of purity and were health to those who heard them. The words of health and wisdom, which came from the lips of Him who is the Wisdom of God, are spoken of many times in the book of Proverbs. "The tongue of the wise is health" (Prov. 12:18). Preëminently above all others, could it be said of Him who was God's ambassador to fallen and sin-cursed humanity: "A faithful ambassador is health." Only through Him were words spoken that could heal sin-sick souls. It is Jehovah alone who "healeth the broken in heart and bindeth up their wounds," for "He sendeth forth His Word and healeth them." It is by the stripes of Him who is the incarnate "Word," that we are healed in spirit, soul and

body; and in none other is there either spiritual or physical health.

In this figure that is used to describe the lips of the Beloved, there is the thought of sweetness and purity, as well as of health. When our Lord was upon the earth, those about Him marveled at the words of grace that proceeded out of His mouth, for He spoke as one having authority and not as other men. We see the beauty and the tenderness that were continually dropping from His mouth, as we read His words that are recorded. He never spoke a word of Himself, for He said: "I can speak nothing of Myself."

In Luke 4:32, we are told that they were astonished at His words, for they were with authority; and a little further on, we see that the multitude pressed upon Him that they might hear the Word of God. The people also declared that He was a prophet, mighty in word and in deed. In the twentieth chapter of Luke, we are told that the scribes and the chief priests sent spies to Him, that they might take hold of His speech so as to deliver Him to the authorities.

In the eleventh chapter of Luke, we read that: "The scribes and Pharisees began to press upon Him vehemently, and to provoke Him to speak of many things; laying wait for Him, to catch something out of His mouth." But He spoke with such wisdom, that "they were not able to take hold of the saying before the people."

His lips ever dropped sweet perfume and liquid myrrh; not only in speech but also in silence did this perfume go up to the Father. "He was oppressed, yet when He was afflicted He opened not His mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth." When He stood before the high priest, and was accused through many false witnesses, "Jesus held His peace;" and later, as He stood before Pilate, and these accusations were again brought against Him, we are told: "He

gave him no answer, not even to one word: insomuch that the governor marveled greatly."

"Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, threatened not" (1 Pet. 2:22, 23). Only as His Father gave Him something to say did He reply to any of their accusations; and in this silence, which was His as He carried out the will of God, there was a dropping of liquid myrrh that was well-pleasing to the Father.

5:14. **"His hands are as rings of gold set with beryl."** The ring is a sign of freedom, of sonship, of authority and power. The signet ring of a king holds within it, His power and authority. There is some difference of opinion as to the meaning of this clause, but whatever other meanings may be hidden away in this description of the hands of the Beloved, we shall speak of the two that we believe will interest us the most. First, the meaning, signet ring, or the expression of the power and authority of Jesus Christ, which are at our disposal continually and for every need. Second, the freedom, gifts, and bestowments, which are ours through Christ's power and authority.

As the gold ring is an emblem of sonship, so an iron ring is the sign of slavery; in those days, no slave was allowed to wear a gold ring. When the prodigal son returned to his father's house and would have become his servant, we remember that the father did not put upon his finger the iron ring of a slave, but he put a gold ring upon his hand, which was a sign that he was received as his son.

Thus it was with us when we were brought nigh, and through Jesus Christ our Lord, received the adoption of sons unto God. Our adoption into God's family proves that Christ has broken the bars of our yoke that we may walk upright. Every fetter of sin has been broken by the Lion of the tribe of Judah. All bondage to the law has been nailed to the Cross

of Jesus Christ, and is forever done away for those who have come to Christ on the cross, and been saved.

In the place of the iron ring of slavery to sin and the law, Christ has given unto us His gold signet ring, "In My Name." "In His Name" shows our liberty from slavery and adoption into God's family. It shows our union with Jesus Christ and our betrothal to Him. It shows the power and authority with which He has vested us in this precious signet ring.

A ring given by a king to a subject, always betokens authority. When Pharaoh gave his signet ring to Joseph and set him over the whole of Egypt, he had absolute authority over all, Pharaoh himself excepted. Every decree Joseph sent out, was sealed with the signet ring that the king had given to him. King Ahasuerus, likewise, gave his signet ring to Haman and afterward to Mordecai who succeeded Haman.

Jesus Christ wears the signet ring of the omnipotent God, which betokens His eternal Sonship and authority from God. This ring of authority distinguishes Him from all others. Though others may claim authority from God, none but the real Christ wears the signet ring of the Most High. "All authority hath been given Me in Heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18).

Not only upon the hands of the Bridegroom are there rings of gold, but He also gives His signet ring to the bride, with the power to come and ask in His Name and by His authority (John 16:24, 26). If we apprehend this secret of power and learn how to use "The Name of Jesus," it will solve every difficulty that can arise in our earthly pilgrimage. If we come to God in our own name, nothing will be done any more than the name of Joseph could have brought things to pass without the seal of Pharaoh. But when we come to God "In the name of Jesus Christ," our petition is sealed with the signet of God's Son Jesus Christ; and whatever we ask according to the will of God, must be granted unto us.

We can only be pleasing to God as we test to the uttermost the power in this signet which Jesus Christ has bought for us at such a price; and which He has put at the disposal of His bride. How meagerly do we enter into the authority with which Christ has vested us. How little do we receive from the Lord, when we have the, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in My Name," of Jesus Christ to bring to the Father with every request; and the promise that He will even do more than we can ask or think.

Christ has entrusted this precious signet ring of power and authority to every child of God, from the weakest to the strongest, from the smallest to the greatest. It is more than sufficient for every request and petition, every desire and necessity; and the Lord urges us to use it and ask largely that God may be glorified.

"Behold, I give you power over all the power of the enemy," are the words of our dear Lord. "If ye shall ask anything in My name I will do it." What did the ring of Pharaoh signify concerning Joseph and his position in the kingdom of Egypt? It signified that whatever Joseph decreed could be sealed with the signet ring of the king. If Joseph had been as full of doubt and fears as we are, to whom has been given the authority to use the Name of Jesus, he would have failed Pharaoh many times because of fear and questioning.

The Lord would have us ever use this seal of the authority with which He has entrusted us. As we do this in faith, we shall go from victory to victory; and God will be glorified through Jesus Christ. When we ask "In the Name of Jesus Christ," we affix the seal of the King of kings and the Lord of lords to our petitions. When we come in faith and vested with His authority, we shall find that mountains will move, and the impossible will become, not only possible, but easy; and all that we ask according to His will and in His Name, shall be done to His glory. The devil does not fear when we

use our own name, nor when we do not know how to use this precious signet of Jesus Christ; but he trembles when he sees the real signet of the Son of God affixed to any petition or to any command.

"His body is as ivory overlaid with sapphires." (or "bright ivory encrusted with sapphires.") This sets forth Jesus Christ as the Son of Man and the Son of God. Ivory is among the purest, most beautiful, and valuable of earth's products. This bright ivory, or ivory work, is another and most precious symbol of Christ's human body. It was He who said: "A body didst thou prepare for Me." This body was beautiful because God prepared it for His only-begotten and well-beloved Son to dwell in.

Though in the eyes of man, He had no form nor comeliness and no beauty that they should desire Him, to those who saw in Him the Messiah, His body was bright because of that which dwelt within. His body appeared to the Jews as poor and weak, a hut or tent in which dwelt an unknown, despised and rejected man; but to the Father and to the bride, it was beautiful ivory overlaid with sapphires. Although He dwelt in a despised human body, in Him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

In the 45th Psalm, the pure human body given up to God, is described as an ivory palace. Ivory is a fit symbol of the human body that is given up and purified for God. It is not only "ivory," but it is *wrought* ivory, *bright* ivory, which symbolizes the perfecting and working of the Holy Spirit upon our precious Lord, as He learned obedience through the things that He suffered.

Not only is the body of His humiliation in which Christ dwelt when He was upon earth, symbolized by "bright, wrought ivory," but His mystical body, the church, is still upon earth and it is of bright, wrought ivory. The members of His body, are "ivory palaces," bright, shining; and they

are being wrought and perfected. With them, it is a work of cleansing and purifying that they may be fit to be part of that body which is pure ivory. He has left the church upon earth that it may receive all the preparation and working of the Holy Spirit that must appear upon it before it is fit to be manifested with its glorious Head.

Beloved, do you realize that you are a part of that body which is as bright, wrought ivory? Do you realize that it is only as you yield to the working of God through the Holy Spirit, that the work upon the ivory can go on; that the brightness and purity can appear?

As the white linen in the Jewish temple showed forth the pure, spotless manhood of Christ, so does the ivory show forth His spotless manhood. The wife of the Lamb must put on the white linen garment, she must be purified and wrought upon until she shall shine forth as bright wrought ivory. Then shall it be true that "out of ivory palaces stringed instruments have made Thee glad" (Ps. 45:8).

This bright ivory was overlaid with sapphires. This figure is taken from the garments of eastern monarchs whose dress is richly and lavishly overlaid with most precious stones. This is parallel in symbolism and meaning to the white linen veil, curtains, and priestly garments in the Jewish temple, which were wrought with gold, blue, purple, and scarlet. Only the blue, or "sapphire," is mentioned here, which means the heavenly.

God would have us never lose sight of the precious fact, that though He sent His Son to dwell in a human body for thirty odd years, that human body was holy, bright, and perfectly wrought by the Holy Spirit. Upon that body, symbolized by the cedar and pure white linen of the Jewish temple, and by the bright wrought ivory of the Song of Solomon, appeared the heavenly, of which the sapphire is always the figure.

The heavenly was ever manifested upon the Lord as He

walked upon this earth, although not all who looked upon Him discerned it. The ivory, smooth and shining, encrusted with sapphires, shows forth our Lord, wrought upon by the Holy Spirit until every lesson of obedience was learned through suffering, and the heavenly blue covering Him so that all marveled who beheld Him.

How reassuring it is to remember that the heavenly was upon our Lord from the beginning; and by the resurrection from the dead, He was declared to be the Son of God with power. Though He came and lived and died as a man, He was clothed and girded with the power of God. The blue sapphires also show forth the girding with power and the love of God, which reached down from Heaven and "gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have eternal life."

Because we are in Jesus, we too may be girded with the power of God, we too, may be upheld by His love which passeth understanding. Let us look away to Jesus, and let the Holy Spirit work upon us the sapphires of the heavenly, and make us fit to be members of the body of His Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER XXXII

"HE IS ALTOGETHER LOVELY," AND HE IS OURS. 5:15.

5:15. **"His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold."** The legs of our Lord were as pillars, strong, symmetrical, beautiful; they would never falter nor fail. In all things God does the "exceeding abundantly" above all man can think. It would be a marvelous and gracious act, most worthy of God, if He had restored man to earthly purity and happiness alone. But God's plan was as much higher than this, as Heaven is higher than earth. In the place of bringing man back to the garden of Eden, God made a plan for him to be brought up to the heavenly garden of God.

He has lifted him from sin and degradation and made him a new creature in Christ Jesus. In the place of only setting him over the earth, and over the beasts and all upon the earth, He has raised him up above all principalities and powers and made him to sit in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. He has made it possible for him to sit with Christ in His throne. He has made him heir of God and joint-heir with Jesus Christ. He has made him a temple of God, and has come in His tripersonality and taken up His abode in him. As we contemplate the manifestation of God's grace and mercy to usward, we exclaim with the psalmist: "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? or the son of man that Thou visitest him?"

In order to carry out this plan of redemption, there must be a Saviour; and we are told that God's own right arm brought salvation. For this infinite and eternal purpose to

be accomplished, it needed a Saviour who was not weak nor faltering; and such a Saviour could only be found in Jesus Christ our Lord. As He went over the mountains of separation from God to find the lost sheep and bring them back, His legs were "pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold." They were steadfast and could not be turned out of the way, because they were set upon sockets of fine gold. He went forth, conquering and to conquer.

His legs were not the uneven legs of the lame, as were those of all other men, but they were perfect, white, strong and steadfast, a type of unfailing strength. The sin and iniquity of the world were laid upon Him, and only as His legs were pillars of marble could they carry away the sins of the world. All who had come before Him failed, and all who have come after Him failed, but He has never failed. There was some weakness or frailty with all of those who have walked with God, even with those who were nearest to Him and seemed to be making straight tracks. Though for a long time they might walk steady and straight, at times there would be mistakes, a crooked step or a back step, which showed that their legs were not equal. They were not pillars of marble.

Then the Christ of God came and dwelt in the body that God had prepared for Him, the body, which was as wrought ivory encrusted with sapphires. As He came leaping upon the mountains of separation and skipping upon the hills, we praise God that His legs were not unequal; neither were they of unstable wood nor other unreliable material. They were pillars of marble. He can carry every lost soul back to God and to Heaven if they will let Him. He can carry all our burdens for His legs will never fail nor grow tired. It is with legs that are as pillars of marble, that He stands in our behalf at the right hand of God, a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

The pillars of marble are a symbol of Christ's omnipotence, and upon them does the salvation of the world rest. Because the leg is an emblem of strength, God did not suffer the soldiers to break the legs of our Lord. Not a bone was broken; neither can any burden nor weight be beyond His power, which is infinite as He is infinite. As He came over the Mountains of Bether and brought the gospel of peace to a sin-cursed world, He was the first of whom it could be said: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, thy God reigneth."

The sockets of fine gold are the golden sandals He wore, the gold symbolizing the divine. As a pillar is set in a socket to make it steadfast, His legs are represented as being made steadfast in the power of God. In the Jewish temple, the sockets which supported the boards and the veil before the Holiest place, were made of silver, the symbol of atonement. Truly, all the work of Jesus Christ to usward rests upon the atonement He made for our sins. Also in S. of Sol. 3:11, the pillars that upheld the covering of the chariot were of silver (see notes on ch. 3:11). But Jesus Christ, the Son of God, needs no atonement to uphold and make Him steadfast. His strength and His goings are upheld by the Godhead, the fullness of which dwells in Him alone.

His feet were adorned with golden sandals, which signify the power and purpose of God in Christ's work and in the gospel. They were clothed with the preparation of the gospel of peace and were upheld by the power of God, so that they could not slip down any chasms of sin and failure, as He came over the mountains of separation and brought us the gospel. It was not through the wisdom and working of sinful man, that redemption was brought to us. It was through the Son of God, whose human body was as pure ivory, enwrapped in the heavenly mantle of God's love and power.

This salvation was brought through God, our Saviour, whose legs are as pillars of marble, whose feet are shod with sandals of gold betokening the authority and power of the Godhead. Without Him, the gospel would never have been given to mankind; and because He brought it to us through the work which He did upon the cross, we also must clothe our feet with the preparation of this gospel of peace. If they are thus clothed, we shall never slip; if they are thus clothed, we can lead others into the fullness of partaking in this gospel, which Christ brought to us, and which was preached by Him first of all, to the glory of the Father.

The iron nails represent the power of Satan and of man. It was when they were driven into His feet, that the devil bruised His heel, or His manhood. It was when His feet were pierced upon the Cross of Calvary, that they came over the mountains of God's wrath. And God has left the prints of those iron nails in the beloved feet that brought to you and me this wonderful gospel. Without the piercing of His feet, His hands, His side, out there upon the hill of Calvary, there could have been no gospel, there could have been no salvation, and there could have been no good tidings to proclaim.

Shall we ever tire of remembering Him who was pierced for us? Shall we ever tire of pouring out our love and adoration upon those pierced, though gold-clad feet? Can we ever forget that He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed? And it was only as those feet were shod with the authority of God, it was only as His legs were as pillars of marble, that He could bear our griefs, and carry our sorrows. He poured out His life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors; He bare the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors.

From head to foot He is gold. From His head of pure,

fine gold, to the sandals upon His feet, He is clothed with the power of the Godhead and the authority of the Deity. There is no dross in Him, all is pure and holy. From the ivory of His pure manhood, to the gold of His divinity, no spot or impurity is found anywhere.

"His aspect is like Lebanon, excellent as the cedars." This is looking upon Him in His complete beauty and power, with all the marked characteristics that have been thus far described, and which make up a majestic and awe-inspiring whole. The bride of the Lamb has described the One whom her soul loveth, beginning with the two characteristic colors that are His alone, and the many banners that float above the head of Him who, through His work on the cross, brought to naught the devil with all the powers and the principalities. And then in detail, beginning with the Head of most fine gold, she has described Him from head to foot. Now she exclaims that His aspect is like Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.

Lebanon was thus named because of the snow that crowned its head and because of the white limestone, which abounded there. This lofty, snow-crowned mountain sets forth the majesty and grandeur of Christ, both as Son of Man and Son of God. Though He was despised and rejected by man, even while He was here upon earth, the hosts of Satan beheld in Him the majestic Lebanon. As He cast out demons, they trembled before Him and acknowledged Him to be the Son of God. Man turned his face away from Him who came down from the bosom of the Father and was planted upon earth as the Heavenly Lebanon; but the demons believed and trembled.

As the snow water from Lebanon flows down and waters the valley beneath, from Christ alone flows the pure water of life upon fallen humanity. His majesty appeared to those who loved Him, and His glory was revealed to the three disciples as they tarried with Him upon the Mount of Transfiguration. Lebanon symbolizes not only His majesty, but He was pure and white, bright and shining, as the head of Lebanon.

How often we come to our Lord as though He were a man like unto ourselves. We realize that His cheeks are as a bed of spices, we rejoice that His face is like terraces of beautiful fragrant flowers, but we lack the reverence and fear which should ever be upon us. Let us not forget that He who dwelt in the body that God prepared for Him, also inhabits Eternity; He is in Heaven and we upon earth. We must behold Jesus Christ, not only as the Son of Man, but as the Son of God. We must not only smell His fragrance, but we must behold His majesty and worship Him; He is all majesty, and from His face all Heaven and earth shall one day flee away; and He will consume His enemies with the breath of His nostrils. We must pray that we may not only drink of this pure water that springs from the throne of God, and, through Christ, is flowing down to earth; but that we may apprehend the suffering through which the fountain was opened. We must ask God that we may not only see His hair, curly and black as a raven, the symbol of His manhood, but that we may behold Him as the "Ancient of Days."

The more closely we draw to Him, and the more intimately we know Him, the more clearly we see Him in His majesty; and, strange to say, it is when we see Him the clearest as, "The Ancient of Days," that we seem to be brought into a closer and deeper place of confidence and intimacy with Him, as "The Man of Sorrows." We cannot behold Him as Lebanon until we have been brought into an intimate relation with Him, as the Saviour upon the cross. As we go on unto maturity, we see Him in all His many-sided beauties, and in His peculiarly different aspects. Many of them are seemingly contradictory, but we must know Him in all of them.

Humble, as the bed of spices and the terraces of sweet flowers in the valley, yet majestic as the mountain of Lebanon. His Godhead crowning Him as most fine gold, yet with the black and curly locks of manhood. His eyes like doves that

bathe beside the full streams, and yet they are looking and seeing all things that are hidden away within us, and in our lives. Eyes full of compassion, yet eyes that pierce to the inmost depths of our hearts.

His body white and pure as polished and carved ivory, yet "encrusted" with the heavenly; His legs like marble pillars, which is another of earth's most beautiful products, but they are set upon sockets of gold. His feet are clad in golden sandals, the sign of God's power, but in those feet are the prints of the iron nails with which they were pierced for you and for me. The cedar tree is an emblem of Christ's pure humanity. It is durable, and neither rot nor worm works upon it. Thus, under another figure is the pure manhood of Christ set forth.

5:16. **"His mouth is most sweet."** In the first chapter of the Song of Solomon, the bride prays with intense longing, for a nearer approach to the Bridegroom: "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth." Even in those first days of her longing for her Beloved, His mouth was sweet to her. The sweetness of the mouth is a figure of His response in communion and in love, which none other than the soul itself can know. Though every virgin in the bride may taste this sweetness of the mouth of her Beloved, it is a relation into which each must enter for herself.

Only the Lord can draw us close enough to Himself to taste of this sweetness of communion and fellowship, which is here symbolized by the mouth being "most sweet;" and we cannot take any one else into this place of privilege. It is the revelation of His beauties to the soul. It is the communication of His love to His bride, and the preciousness and sweetness of the relation between them. It is a figure of the communion, which is ever increasing and deepening in those who live in His presence and walk softly before Him. It is the revelation of His love that passeth knowledge; of such joy as is full of glory; of such peace as passeth all understanding; of such

faith and love as bind us to Him in ever-increasing power and oneness.

Only because "His mouth is most sweet," and only as it is most sweet to us, can we apprehend the love of Christ that passeth knowledge. Many of those whom He has redeemed, have never lived close enough to Him to experience the sweetness with which His breath is ladened. Oh! that we may draw near enough to our Beloved to ever experience that His mouth is sweet. May this relation between us be without intermission, may it increase and become so close that we shall continually experience the sweetness of His mouth.

"Yea, He is altogether lovely." There is nothing about Him that we would have different; altogether, and to the smallest detail, He is lovely, He is precious, He is our all and in all. To the bride of Christ, there is no loveliness nor beauty in any other; and not in one thing would she have Him changed or different. There is no defect nor spot in Him, there is no blemish in Him, in all things He is delightful.

It is not when we are following afar off, that we find Jesus Christ "altogether lovely;" it is not when we are flirting with the world, nor when we are compromising the Truth of the gospel, that we experience the sweetness of His mouth. It is when we draw close to Him, and follow hard after Him; when we constrain Him to come in and sup with us, and we with Him, that we exclaim: "His aspect is like Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. His mouth is most sweet." It is when all else has faded away into insignificance, and He alone fills our vision, that we apprehend the sweetness of His love, which can only be revealed to us as we enter into this place of separation.

It is as we set our faces to know Him; it is as we go through the keenest suffering and persecution for His dear sake, in order to receive all He has for us, that He is altogether lovely. Only as we are without the gate can our eyes

be anointed with heavenly eyesalve; only as our eyes are anointed by the Holy Spirit can we see Him clearly. Then do we realize that there is none else who is lovely; and to us, none other is desirable and delightful. How much of the revelation of the Lord we miss because we will not pay the price! How many times He would reveal Himself to us, but we are not willing to enter into the place where He can meet us!

"This is my Beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem." She would have them know that this one, whom she has been describing, is the one who loves her; and this is the one whom she loves. It is He who has proved His love for her by dying that she might be His spotless bride. He is drawing her to Himself that she may discern His beauties and experience His preciousness, which He is waiting to reveal to every soul who will pay the price.

When Christ hides His face for a season, whether it is to quicken our faith or because of some infidelity on our part, it seems that His beauty breaks in upon our souls as never before. This is most mysterious and awe-inspiring, and only those who are close to the Lord have experienced it. Even to them, it is past understanding, as all deep experiences are to the human creature. When we are enjoying His presence and the sweetness of continual fellowship, we may become a little indolent. We may take our communion with Him as a matter of course, if, indeed, we do not let it become common. We settle down and look upon His presence and sweetness, we receive His favors as though they were our due. It seems impossible that we can ever lose this touch and relation, which we have acquired through much following and running after Him in the past. We take it as a permanent possession and become a little careless.

It is not that we do not love our Lord, but His beauty may become a little dim because we have not been deprived of it.

His voice may not have the power upon our hearts that it had when first we heard it. His majesty may not inspire us with the awe we felt when He first revealed Himself to us as the majestic and Heavenly Lebanon. The gold of the divine upon His head and upon His feet may not arouse in us such reverence, and confidence in His power to work for us.

But when we hear Him at the door of our hearts, and at last arise to let Him in; when we find He has withdrawn, and we hurry about the city in search of Him, we deplore our slackness and long for His presence as never before. With Job, we say: "Oh that I were as in the months of old, as in the days when God watched over me; when His lamp shined upon my head, and by His light I walked through darkness . . . when the friendship of God was upon my tent; when the Almighty was yet with me" (Job 29:2-5). As we go from shepherd to shepherd, from street to alley, from the wide places to the bypaths and do not find Him, we begin to see Him more clearly than we have ever seen Him. It is then, we can describe Him in His every aspect as we could never have done before.

Dear reader, have you drawn close enough to Jesus Christ to see the spotless white upon Him? Have you come to the foot of the cross and beheld the blood red upon the spotless Lamb of God? Have you apprehended that He has dyed His garment in red that you might partake of the white? Have you realized that the authority and power of the Godhead crowns Him, and clothes Him from head to foot? Have you heard His lips speak peace to your soul? Have you heard His lips calling you to follow harder after Him lest you miss that which He has for you?

Have you received from Him the ring of sonship to God? Have you received from Him the ring of betrothal? Have you drawn close enough to behold His mantle of heavenly blue? Do you rejoice that He was very man; and that because He

has been tempted in all points like as you are, He can be touched with the feeling of your infirmities? Have you entered into such communion with Him that you have heard His voice, and learned to know and love it? If you have not experienced this of which we are speaking, hasten before it is too late, and enter into all that God has for you.

When you have thus entered in and know the Lord, there is no voice so sweet as His. None other can satisfy you if you have opened the door for the Lord to come and dwell with you. All the earth must keep silence when He is in His holy temple, if you would always hear that voice, which is as the sound of a gentle breath. If you try to prevail upon Him to speak, if you try to listen too hard, you will get into such disquietude, that when He does speak, your anxiety will drown out the sound of His voice. Your thoughts, your opinions, your desires will drown out that voice which is but a breath, "a sound of gentle stillness."

To those who are obedient and really know Him, He is altogether lovely; there is no defect in Him, there is no shortage. We would have nothing changed, indeed our hearts rejoice that there is no change in Him, for He is the unchangeable One. However unsteady man is, however unsteady we are, our Beloved is always the same, and there is no variableness with Him, neither shadow that is cast by turning. He is always the same lovely, beautiful Jesus, the Beloved of our souls, the One altogether lovely, the One who lets us love Him and the One who loves us.

He is not only our beloved Bridegroom, but He is our Friend and our only Friend. Human friends may be untrue, and at some time, in some way, all human friends fail and disappoint us; but this Friend, this One whose beauties we have just been considering, will never fail us. He will never disappoint us; He will always fulfill all our hopes, and answer all our prayers, and He will be to us and do for us "exceeding and abundantly above all that we can ask or think."

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE HUNGER OF THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM, AND THE BRIDE'S CONFIDENCE STRENGTHENED. 6:1-3.

6:1. **"Whither is thy Beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? Whither hath thy Beloved turned Him, that we may seek Him with thee?"** There is nothing that arouses the hunger of others for the Lord, as to see Christians earnestly seeking Him, and hear them describe the beauty of their Beloved. From time to time have the "Daughters of Jerusalem" been addressed by the bride. The first time was when she told them of her blackness and unworthiness and besought them not to judge her Lord by the defects they beheld upon her. She always addresses them as those who are looking on and are not enemies, although they are not followers of the Lord. But now we see the result of a consistent, consecrated life upon those who have been watching the bride since she first came to the Lord.

Those who do not know the Lord are never drawn to Him through the lives of indifferent Christians. It matters not how learned and eloquent a servant or follower of the Lord is; it matters not how blessed they appear to be, or how plausible their teaching or testimonies may be, if their lives are inconsistent and lack victory, the unbelievers about them only see the discrepancies between their lives and words.

It is through the bride's love and obedience, through her patience in persecution, and perseverance, that the daughters of Jerusalem are aroused into real hunger for the Lord. From

an attitude of indifference, they are at last brought to a place of hunger and desire, to a longing to seek Him with the bride.

It was not when they saw her rejoicing because the King had brought her into His chambers; it was not when they saw her sick with love because He had brought her into His Banqueting House, that hunger was planted within them. Though the rest and joy of a Christian who is happy and contented in the Lord, always has a charm for those who are looking on; there is nothing that will draw others to Christ like the unconscious abandonment which is here portrayed.

The humility that did not cover her fault of slothfulness; the love that bore all things, hoped all things, endured all things, and never failed under persecution, have convinced them that her Beloved must be more than she has even described. They have seen her persecuted by reason of her godly repentance and hunger for her Beloved. They have watched her as she was smitten and humiliated by those who should have comforted and supported her, and they have wondered that she has not stopped in her search for her Bridegroom, but rather has hastened her steps.

With amazement, they see that all opposition but makes her love the Lord more devotedly and seek Him more zealously. They can see that this is not a passing whim, neither is it a pretense, as the watchmen would have them believe. Whims and pretenses always defend themselves and cannot endure through persecution, but she did not stop to defend herself; though the treatment of the watchmen was undeserved, her attention was attracted only for a moment. The more she was opposed, the more eagerly she inquired of all whom she met, and besought those about her to tell Him she was sick because of love for Him, and because of the separation from Him. The bride not only regrets her indolence that caused this separation, but she has repented with a godly repentance that works deep in her heart; and through which a hunger for the Lord has arisen that nothing can satisfy but Him.

The backslidden Christian, or the professing Christian who has never tasted of real salvation, always misunderstands and despises the hunger of a soul who is following hard after the Lord. Very often, those who make no profession of religion discern the sincerity in a hungry one, which professing Christians refuse to see; and even sinners are convinced that only a mighty, mysterious attraction and charm, could thus work upon one so persecuted and misunderstood.

When Christians are not going on with the Lord, there is nothing that will so convict them as to behold some child of God who is consumed with love and zeal toward Jesus Christ. When they see others who are panting after God "as the hart comes up panting to the water brooks," they can but behold their own coldness and barren condition. If they yield to the Spirit's conviction, they, too, will join those who are pursuing after the Lord. If they refuse to humble themselves, they will persecute and hate the hungry ones whom God has used to convict them, and will begin to smite them with their tongues.

We should always examine prayerfully, and weigh carefully, the criticising and slanderous words that are spoken by those who are not walking close to God. We should never be influenced by those who are not taking up the cross and following Jesus; by those who are jealous because of another's attainments and near approach to God. Unchristlike words spoken against those who are following hard after the Lord, always come from a heart that has grown cold, and from a life that is backslidden.

When any of God's children begin to be drawn closer to the Lord and to run after Him with more earnestness and devotion, the persecution from half-hearted Christians begins, and increases in proportion to the increase of this devotion and hunger. This is a strange and lamentable condition, which prevails too much among the people of God.

The hunger of the bride, which is here portrayed, is alto-

gether different from that remorse which is felt by those who are not living as they ought. When sinners are drawn to know the Lord through the life of some child of God, we may believe that Christ is shown forth in that life, and that the life is consistent. Those who know not the Lord despise the Christians or servants of God who are indifferent, and whose lives are not Christlike.

"O thou fairest among women." In the beginning of the book, when the bride is lamenting her blackness and unworthiness, the Bridegroom calls her the "fairest of women." Those who were about her then did not see her beauty, but He who looks upon the heart saw her love and devotion; He who sees the end from the beginning, beheld His own beauty appearing upon her. But in the sixth chapter, those about her are beginning to see her resemblance to her Lord.

The love and fidelity of the bride to her Beloved is the secret of her appearing beautiful in the eyes of the daughters of Jerusalem. Well may they call her the "fairest of women," for the light of Heaven is upon her upturned face. It is not that she is beautiful in herself; but the consuming hunger that God has planted in her heart, has brought a holy light to her face, which makes the plainest face beautiful.

How our hearts have been melted with tender love and admiration, as we have looked upon some humble unprepossessing children of God, and have seen their faces shine with the light of Heaven. How we have been provoked unto holy jealousy as we have seen the transfiguring power of Jesus Christ clothe the most unattractive face with unearthly beauty. As those who beheld only the natural, spoke of the lack of attraction in some child or servant of God, we marveled that they did not see the heavenly beauty that we saw upon their faces.

Would you increase in beauty, would you bear the likeness of your Home country and God's family? Then let your eyes

refuse to behold any one or anything but Jesus Christ. Let Him fill your vision and let your heart be filled with the one purpose of doing the will of God. Looking unto Christ, loving and beholding Him, will clothe the homeliest face with surpassing beauty. "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit."

With a steadfast upward gaze, the eyes of the bride are fixed upon the everlasting hills, from whence cometh her help. The beauty of her Beloved so fills her vision, the love of Jesus Christ so fills her heart, that she does not see the unfaithful watchmen, nor does she notice the loss of the admiration of those with whom she has been mingling. She is unmoved by the pains through which she has passed.

Her weary and worn feet have not only been soiled with the dust of the floor, a figure of slight misunderstanding; but they are stained with the mire and the mud of the streets, which is a figure of the contumely cast upon her by those who claim to be the servants and followers of the Lamb. Her feet are bruised with the stones of stumbling and hindrances that have been put in her way, but over which she has hastened upheld by the right hand of His righteousness, though unseen by her.

With Paul, her heart says to her Lord: "None of these things move me." "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ, and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law;" that I may be clothed in the righteousness which is from God through faith in Jesus Christ. I gladly suffer the loss of all things: "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, becoming con-

formed unto His death;" that when He comes for His bride, I may attain unto the out-resurrection from the dead (Phil. 3:7-11).

6:2. **"My beloved is gone down to His garden to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies."** Historically, this sets forth the body of Jesus Christ reposing in the sepulchre upon the bed of spices. None of us realize the suffering through which the disciples passed when Jesus was crucified. Looking back upon it, with the knowledge of His resurrection, and of that which the death of Christ has brought to the world, we cannot apprehend what it meant to His beloved disciples as they stood and watched Him hanging upon the cross: as hour after hour they stood and watched Him dying there: as the soldiers took Him down from the cross and they saw He was dead.

Did they look for Him to come down? It would not be strange, for they had seen Him do such miracles as only the Son of God could do. They had seen Him rebuke death, and command it to bring back the life it had snatched from the land of the living. As they stood and watched Him, how their hearts would have rejoiced if He had stepped down from the cross; but their precious Lord did not come down from the cross.

Although He had taught them for three and a half years, they understood not His sayings. They did not yet apprehend that it "behooved the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory." They did not yet know that "All things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the Psalms" concerning Him. He had not yet "opened their mind that they might understand the Scriptures." They had not understood that it was written: "That the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name unto all nations beginning from Jerusa-

lem." As they stood and watched Him die, they did not realize that they were being prepared to be His witnesses, and thus fit into God's plan.

The reproach of the cross and the shame that enshrouded Him as He hung and died there, so filled their eyes, they could not see beyond the shame and grief of the present moment and behold the King of Glory sitting upon His throne. The anguish that consumed them, blinded their eyes to the great joy set before Him and them. The death of the grain of wheat hid the eternal and plenteous harvest, which it would bring forth as it died. If He had come down from the cross, we would never have had this uttermost salvation, which came through His death and resurrection. There would have been no redemption for even one soul; there would have been no bride nor marriage supper of the Lamb.

How prone we are to lose sight of the precious fruits that come from our own cross when it is taken up and faithfully borne. Do not let the suffering of the cross hide the glory that crowns it. Do not let the shame that always accompanies "dying daily," fill your vision and exclude the beauty of Christ's manifested life. As death works in your members, do not let the despair of death dim the glorious hope of the resurrection. "If we died with Him, we shall also live with Him; if ye endure, we shall also reign with Him."

With these disciples, their Beloved had gone down to His garden and to His bed of spices. They took down that precious body and laid it in "a new tomb wherein was never man yet laid." They brought a wealth of spices to make the bed upon which His body should rest, and which symbolized the eternal Mountains of Spices that He has just brought to fallen humanity. The body of our dear Lord Jesus Christ was reposing in the tomb, or in the Mountain of Myrrh (ch. 4:6), but this is not all that is meant when we are told that He has gone down *to His garden.* It was out of that tomb that the risen,

living Christ came forth, and it was out of that tomb that the Kingdom of God on earth came forth. If Christ had not died and risen again, then fallen humanity could have had no access to God; but when Christ died upon the cross and when He rose from the dead, He set up the Kingdom of God upon earth.

We see that it was *His* garden. It did not belong to the rich man, although the earthly resting place of His human body was in the rich man's tomb, and in the rich man's garden (John 19:41). The garden to which He went, was not only this earthly garden; but He went to the terraces of Paradise, to His garden in which He would plant many pleasant plants. He went to the garden where many beautiful white lilies would grow to the glory of God the Father.

He died that He might plant in the Kingdom of God on earth, the pure lilies of which we read (ch. 2:2). He died that He might transplant to the heavenly Garden, Paradise, the plants He had come and plucked out of a sin-cursed earth. He went up to the Hill of Frankincense, and lay in the Mountain of Myrrh, that He might gather beautiful blossoms, which should bloom throughout eternity in the Garden of God.

Can we marvel that there is joy in Heaven over one sinner that is saved, when we apprehend that Christ came into the world, and went up to Calvary, that He might save sinners; and in order that these redeemed sinners might become beautiful lilies in the King's garden? As He hung there suffering and dying, He gathered one lily from the cross by His side, and took it up to Paradise with Him. "This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." Ever since that awful day, He has been gathering lilies for the courts of Heaven.

There is an earthly garden of preparation, which is a part of that heavenly garden. In this earthly garden, or Kingdom of God on earth, the hand of God is planting the plants which He has chosen, taking them from the garden, or vineyard of

the world. We see in the first chapter of this book, that the bride had just been taken from the vineyard of the world, which she had been tending; there was still some of the scorch and darkness of the sun upon her neck. The hand of her Beloved had gathered her from the vineyard of sin and planted her in His own garden, that He might tend her and make her worthy for transplanting to the Garden of God in Paradise.

In the original, the first meaning of the word, feedeth, is "to tend a flock; that is, to pasture it." Another precious meaning of this word is: "To associate with; keep company with." Taking this meaning of the word, we rejoice as we see that the inspired Word would impress upon us that Christ is ever in His garden. He does not come and gather lilies and then go away; but He remains in His garden tending His lilies, or His flock. He has not gone up to the Garden in Paradise and left us alone here; but He is watching the part of His garden that is upon earth. He waters it every moment; lest any hurt it, He keeps it night and day (Isa. 27:2).

There is also a spiritual meaning in the word, feed. It has the significance of communion, of spiritually eating or feeding. He is ever waiting to come in and sup with us and we with Him. When we are close enough to Him to hear His words of admonition and encouragement, of reproof and love, He tends and cares for us; and as we sit with Him at His table of communion, He feeds and nourishes us. Thus, He would ever feed with each lily in His garden, He would ever tend it that it may be perfected for the courts of Heaven.

Sometimes He sees that the cold winds of earth would forever blight some tender bud, and He takes up that tender plant and transplants it to the courts above. Beloved, let us not mourn when the hand of our Heavenly Solomon plucks a flower from His earthly garden, and takes it away to the Paradise of Heaven. Little do we know how that flower would have borne the winds and storms, which many times

sweep over the Lord's earthly garden. It might have been borne down to earth and have been so broken, that it would never have risen again. It is in mercy, that the dear Lord many times has taken away some of His lilies from the earth.

When God saves a soul and takes it home, He sees it would not endure the heat of the day. When a chosen vessel unto the Lord begins to drift and get exalted, and God sees he would bring dishonor upon His Name and bring to naught that which has been done through him, God sometimes takes him home for his own sake, and for the sake of God's Word and the gospel. Only as we see others with whom God has not dealt in this way, going out into error and making shipwreck of their calling, can we apprehend God's mercy, and how much better death is in such a case.

When God's chosen instruments are called home, let us walk very softly, and not hastily declare they died because they failed God. Only God knows the hearts; and sometimes He has turned His hand upon those who are rash in their conclusions and judgments concerning others. We can always comfort our hearts by the knowledge that God doeth all things well.

6:3. **"I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine; He feedeth His flock among the lilies."** As the bride describes the beauties of the Bridegroom, and as she remembers that He has gone to His garden, a stronger encouragement arises in her heart. She recalls the precious experiences that she has had with Him, how she has walked and talked with Him by the way. There is a new assurance springs up in her heart, and she declares with joy and holy exultation: "I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine; He feedeth His flock among the lilies," or literally: "I am *for* my Beloved and He is *for* me."

No matter how the storms blow our little barks about; no matter how the hurricanes carry us down into the deep valleys

between the mountain waves; through the darkness of testing, there is a rock of defense and comfort to the soul that can say: "I am for my Beloved and He is for me." Though it seems that the winds will never cease, and the waves be still, and the storm abate; if we can say: "I am for my Beloved and He is for me," we can breast the worst storm, we can ride the highest billows, we can be undismayed in the midst of shipwreck, knowing that the Lord will not let us be put to shame. God will always provide at least "a plank" or some "other things" to bring the trusting soul to shore; and it takes more faith to reach shore on a plank, than it does to sail in on a water-tight vessel. In this way does God increase and perfect our faith.

Only comparatively few of God's children can say from the heart, that they are for their Beloved. It does not mean being for Him in some things and for ourselves in other things, but being for Him in everything and in all we do and say; letting this relation have the preëminence in our hearts and lives. If we apprehended this, and it were as true in our lives as God would have it, how changed many things would be; how many words and acts would be cut off. How many times the hand of our Beloved would turn us aside, when we would decide for ourselves and choose that which was unworthy of Him who died for us. And as our fleshly energy was subdued, we would leave our plans and desires undone while we walked with Him and did the will of God.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE BRIDE MORE BEAUTIFUL AND TERRIBLE THAN ALL EARTHLY OBJECTS. 6:4, 5.

6:4. **"Thou art fair, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners."** After this long silence, and an indefinite length of time in which the bride has suffered many hardships, she again hears the sound of her Beloved's voice. His tender love radiates from every thought expressed in the description which He gives of her beauty.

The meaning of "Tirzah" is "pleasant, well-pleasing." It was a city, beautiful in situation and chosen as the royal city of the kings of Canaan. It was afterward the royal city of the kings of Israel. Tirzah was built upon a hill, and the word, "beautiful," or "fair," has the meaning of "bright, shining," as we have found in other places. We are reminded of our Lord's description of His true followers, which is recorded in Matt. 5:14 ff. "Ye are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. . . . Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in Heaven."

Following hard after the Lord brings us to the place where we are filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. As we learn to know and love the will of God, as we keep in the center of His precious will, we walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing; and we can hear His voice saying that we are as fair as Tirzah. We see that the bride has been walking worthily of the Lord in the

eyes of those who have been watching, until they, too, long to know Him.

Tirzah is a beautiful figure of the bride of the Lamb. First of all, the city was the royal city of the kings of Canaan. In it were idolatry and wickedness, and it was filled with the pomp and grandeur, also with the abominations of the Canaanitish kings and their courts. Afterward, it was captured by the Hebrews, and they made it the royal city of the kings of Israel.

How beautifully this portrays the history of the bride of the Lamb, whether applied to the whole company, or to each virgin in the company. Before the Lord found her, each virgin of the bride was filled with idolatry and wickedness, with sin and uncleanness; she was black and swarthy with sin and the touch of the world. But the Lord went out and captured her, and He made her the royal city of the King of Israel. She became a city of our God, and she is set on a hill so that she cannot be hid.

She is a bright and burning light that is shining in a dark place, so that no enemy can approach from the surrounding valleys without being discerned afar off. The light of Him who is the Light, is not only filling and illuminating her, but from her, the light shines out upon all who behold her. To those who have any drawing toward the Lord, the light comes, pointing them to Him who is the Light; we have seen that this was the case with the daughters of Jerusalem. With those who do not want the Lord, the light from the bride exposes and makes manifest their condition; and it is this light within the bride that makes her discern the approach of the enemy afar off.

When we are as a city set upon a hill, when we are lights of the world, the light within us shines down into the valleys of sin and darkness around us. Every approach is lighted up, every enemy is discerned, every weakness in ourselves is laid

bare; and we go on unto perfection, and from victory to victory.

The King not only compares the bride to the beautiful city of Tirzah, but in His eyes she is "comely as Jerusalem," the royal city of the kings of Judah. In the 48th Psalm, we read the description of the city of our God, and we begin to see deep meanings in these comparisons. "Great is Jehovah, and greatly to be praised, in the city of our God, in His holy mountain." It is in this city, that praises to God ascend day and night. The bride rejoicing in the Lord in light and in darkness, in easy things and in hard things, offers unto Him the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving continually; and thus she is like Jerusalem.

We are told (Ps. 48:2) that she is "beautiful in elevation." Jerusalem was not builded in low swamp lands, but upon a beautiful elevation. Neither are we built up so that we are "comely as Jerusalem," when we remain upon the low lands, amid the fogs, and vapors, amid the miasmas of earthly swamp lands. Upon the high lands, the air is clear, and as we climb higher and higher upon the mountains of God, we become "beautiful in elevation."

This is "The city of the great King," and "God hath made Himself known in her palaces for a refuge." How high is our calling when God has chosen us to be a part of "The city of the great King:" "Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief corner stone; in whom each several building fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit" (Eph. 2:19-22).

Truly in this "city of the great King, . . . God hath made Himself known in her palaces for a refuge" (or "a high tower"). "The name of Jehovah is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and are safe" (Prov. 18:10). Has

He not made Himself known in every palace of this heavenly city, as the Strong Tower and Rock of Defence to every tempest-tossed and tested soul? Only in Him is there safety; only in Him is there protection; only when we are in Him, and continually reckon upon our union with Him can we turn and fight the enemy victoriously. He is more and more making Himself known in the palaces as the days go by, and as we near the entrance into our Father's house, and into the mansions which Christ has gone to prepare for us.

"But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, unto the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in Heaven, and to God the judge of all" (Heb. 12:22, 23).

"And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev. 21:2). "And He spake with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb. And He carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God; her light was like unto a stone most precious as it were a jasper stone clear as crystal." (Rev. 21:9 ff.) Could any description be more beautiful than these which we find in Revelation? The glory of God upon her and her light like unto a precious jasper stone, clear as crystal!

"Out of Zion the perfection of beauty, God hath shined forth" (Ps. 50:2). But before He can shine forth from the palaces of the new Jerusalem, He must command light to shine out of darkness, and He must shine into our hearts, "To give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." We do not see the glory of God upon one another here, for we shall not be glorified until we put off these bodies of our humiliation and are conformed to the body of His

glory. But before the face of God, the bride is being changed from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord; and this change is discerned, though perhaps not understood, by those about her.

We read that "Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compacted together, whither the tribes go up, even the tribes of Jehovah, for an ordinance for Israel, to give thanks unto the name of Jehovah" (Ps. 122: 3, 4). The word translated, "Compacted," has most precious meanings, which more perfectly apply to the heavenly Jerusalem, than to the earthly city. We need not think that this is strange, when we bear in mind that the earthly Jerusalem was the figure of the heavenly Jerusalem, which is the mother of us all. And we are melted before God when we apprehend the full import of these meanings when applied to the bride.

"Compacted" means "to join together by means of fascination; to be charmed and thus bound together; to have fellowship." This sets forth the harmony and beauty in architecture of the earthly Jerusalem, with its lofty walls, its beautiful palaces, its glorious temple. But it sets forth the harmony, the fellowship, the perfect unity of the living stones of the new Jerusalem. These stones, which are built upon the only foundation, Jesus Christ, are compacted together in Him, through the drawing and welding of the Holy Spirit. The love of Christ and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit draw them together, and they are made steadfast through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

There is nothing so beautiful to Christ as the unity of the saints. In our Lord's ineffable prayer, recorded in John seventeen, He prays: "That they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us: . . . I in them and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected into one, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and lovedst them even as Thou lovedst Me." It is

the love and unity that bind believers together, which proves to all who are looking on, that there is a supernatural power in the religion of Jesus Christ.

Others who know not the Lord, are attracted to the bride and to her Beloved as they "Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that came down upon the skirt of his garments; like the dew of Hermon, that cometh down upon the mountains of Zion: for there Jehovah commanded the blessing, even life forevermore" (Ps. 133).

The Bridegroom's comparison of the bride to Tirzah refers especially to her life here; this is brought out in the meaning of the word, which is "well-pleasing." The Bridegroom has repeatedly called her "fair." It is because she walks in obedience, in love, in worship toward Him, seeking to do God's will in all things, that He likens her to Tirzah. The absorbing motive of the bride of Christ, is to always do those things that are well-pleasing to Him.

The comparison of the bride to Jerusalem refers both to this life, and to that which is to come, when she will be manifested as the habitation in the Spirit which God is preparing for Himself.

"Terrible as an army with banners," the meaning of which in this verse, is bannered hosts of soldiers in a fortified city. The bride has just been compared to the two noted cities of the Jews. The Bridegroom now extends His description and declares that she is not only as fair as Tirzah, and as beautiful in her unity and perfection as Jerusalem, but she is as terrible as a city full of valiant hosts that have gone out against the enemy and have brought back innumerable banners. These bannered hosts speak of battles fought and won, of hard conflict with the enemy, in which they came out more than conquerors through Him who loved them.

In the place of being terrible to the enemy because of the banners that we have taken, with shamefacedness, we realize that we have only a few banners to display to the glory of God, compared to the opportunities for victory which have been given us. Every hard battle into which we come, is an opportunity to capture and uplift a banner. In every hard battle or testing, one side or the other always captures a banner, and if it is not we, then it is the enemy. I wonder if we think of this as we ought.

It would be well for us to review the path over which we have traveled. It is wholesome and edifying to remember Moses' exhortation to the Israelites, and to remember all the way which Jehovah our God hath led us, that He might humble us, to prove us, and to know what was in our hearts, whether we would keep His commandments, or not (Deut. 8:2).

How many battle fields lie behind us that speak of our defeat and humiliation before the enemy. How often we have let the enemy carry off the banners, while we brought away only reproach and shame, and many times did not realize what had happened. In all that the Lord our God brings to us or allows to touch our lives, we must remember that there hath no temptation taken us but such as man can bear, and God will not suffer us to be tempted above that which we are able, but will with the temptation make a way of escape, so that we may be able to endure it (1 Cor. 10:13).

It is wonderful grace from God that enables us to look upon all opposition, all conflict, all persecution, all attacks of the enemy, however they may come, as opportunities to add to the precious banners that God has enabled us to take and will enable us to bring up to Him.

The bride is not represented here as downtrodden by the enemy. She is not represented as a defeated army with no banners, all having been captured by the enemy. She is rep-

resented as a mighty, victorious army, as hosts of valiant soldiers of the cross, with so many banners floating that the air above them seems to be alive with these trophies of victory. And, therefore, the inference is, that the enemy is utterly routed.

The precious part is to consider what these banners are and what is inscribed upon them. In the 60th Psalm, we read: "Thou hast given a banner to them that fear Thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth." The fear and reverence of the bride increase with her knowledge of her Beloved, until this precious banner is given her, that it may be displayed because of the Truth.

It is when we fight the good fight of the Faith, that our God gives us this banner; it is as we stand true to the Word of God and for the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, that we display this banner "because of the Truth." And as we stand for the gospel of Jesus Christ, as we enter into our identification with Him in His death and resurrection, with exultant joy, we triumph through this Uttermost Salvation which He has brought and wrought out for us. And *in the name of our God* we continually set up our banners (Ps. 20:5).

The most tender and precious significance of these banners is brought out in Exodus 17:15. "And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi, that is, Jehovah our banner." It was when Jehovah undertook to bring to naught the enemy, that He gave to His people His own Name for their banner. And so it is with the bride of Christ. When the Bridegroom brought the bride into the Banqueting House (ch. 2:4-6), she discerned the banner of the Bridegroom floating over her and upon it was inscribed the name, "Love." That word reveals the character of God in His everlasting love, which was manifested to us in the wonderful salvation, which He has provided through the sacrifice of His only-begotten Son.

Here we again see that the inscription upon the banner the bride carries when she goes out to battle, is the name of her Beloved. Jehovah is her banner, and whenever she is victorious over the world, the flesh or the devil, she sets up a banner, which is inscribed with His Name.

When the nations of earth are in war, it is their ambition to plant the flag of their country upon every foot of the enemy's ground that is possible. When the bride of Jesus Christ goes out to battle, it should be her holy ambition to plant the name of her King upon every contested spot in her life that has been held and is claimed by the enemy. The flag of Heaven bears the name of the King of Heaven; that is, "Love." This is the same banner that Jehovah gave to His Ancient People; for "Jehovah was their banner;" and the name of Jesus Christ (that is, "Love"), who is Jehovah manifested in flesh, is upon our banner.

God has given us one sure instruction by which we can always get victory. We must, first of all, subject ourselves to God, then we must resist the devil, and he will flee from us. As we see ourselves in Jesus Christ, taking sides with Him and resisting the devil, we are made more than conquerors through this relation to Jesus Christ. Beloved, let us learn a lesson from earthly warfare, and it is this; we must look upon the enemy in only one light, and that is AS A FOE TO BE DEFEATED AND UTTERLY ROUTED. Another lesson is, that we must continually strive to add to our banners, and take possession of more territory.

It is when we have been indolent or lacked holy zeal in following and obeying the Lord, that the devil has an advantage over us. It is then that he brings accusations, which cast us down and thus render us an easier mark for his darts and attacks. But to that one who is ever filled with devotion and abandonment to the Lord, and who ever follows hard after Him; to that one who has become expert in using the shield

of faith to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one, the enemy can find no opening in his armor through which to send the fatal blow.

"Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me," or "taken me by force or storm." After her long quest, she has at last found Him and conquered Him by one glance of her eyes, which are looking earnestly for His Coming; the eyes that are as doves that watch for the morning, faithful, pure, chaste; full of fidelity to one mate. So it was with Jacob as he wrestled with the angel of God until daybreak and would not let Him go until He blessed him. Do you think that the Angel of the Covenant, who was none other than Jehovah Himself, could not have drawn Himself away? With a touch, He could have left Jacob there alone, and not granted his request; but Jacob's eager wrestling and fervent determination not to let go of God Himself, though his own weakness was so apparent to him, held the great Jehovah and won for him the blessing that he sought.

When Moses would intercede for God's people, Jehovah said to him: "Now therefore let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation" (Ex. 32:10). The stupendous thought is implied, that because He is a God that hears and answers prayer, He could not let His anger wax hot against them to destroy them if Moses continued to intercede for Israel. How beautifully He yields to Abraham as he intercedes for Sodom and Gomorrah.

And have we not had a taste of these experiences also? Have we not gone to God and held on to Him for something that we knew was His will, and of which the enemy was trying to rob us? Have we not seen Him detained by the fervor of our prayers? Have we not seen His banner floating over us, and have we not known that we have the petition we have been asking of Him? Truly, His gentleness hath made us great!

The Beloved of the church is always detained by the hungry souls who look away to Him and refuse to turn to the right or to the left; whose eyes look straight on and their eyelids straight before them. It is when our souls can say with the psalmist, "O God, Thou art my God; earnestly will I seek Thee: My soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee, in a dry and weary land, where no water is," (Ps. 63:1 ff.) that our Beloved reveals Himself to us.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE BRIDE MORE BEAUTIFUL AND TERRIBLE THAN ALL HEAVENLY OBJECTS. 6:6-10.

6:6, 7. **"Thy hair is as a flock of goats, that lie along the side of Gilead. Thy teeth are like a flock of ewes, which are come up from the washing; whereof every one hath twins, and none is bereaved among them. Thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate behind thy veil."** Once before has the Bridegroom likened the bride's hair to a flock of goats, and at the first glance, it would appear that His description of the bride in this chapter is a partial repetition of that in chapter four.

Though it may appear otherwise to a superficial reader of the Song of Solomon, there are really no repetitions in the book. The context modifies or changes the meaning of the portions that appear to be repetitions. As we look under the surface of this passage and recall that which has intervened since His description of her that is given in the fourth chapter, we shall see that it is far from having the same meaning. Nothing happens with God or is spoken by Him that is without meaning and purpose; and there is a deep significance in the fact that we do not find in this place the fullness of description that is given in the fourth chapter.

In the sixth chapter, the Bridegroom again describes the hair, the teeth, and the blushing temples. These are the points of the bride's beauty that have been marred and partially destroyed since the Bridegroom last described her. She has lain down and slumbered; she has allowed herself to enjoy the admiration of those about her. She has shrunk from arising

to admit her Beloved when He stood throughout the night knocking at the door, when He called her to open the door of her life, that He might come in and reveal Himself to her in a deeper way than ever before.

In the sixth chapter, He does not speak of the lips that are like a thread of scarlet, and the mouth or speech that is so beautiful. He does not speak of the strong, tower-like neck, and its trophies of war and victory; of the breasts of faith and love. Although she has become indolent, she has not defiled her garments, for He calls her His dove, His undefiled. Her lips have not become swollen and leprous because of being sin-stained; they have not lost the color of the blood, which has cleansed them. Her mouth and speech have not lost their beauty, neither has her love and faith in her Lord departed, leaving her deformed and unshapely.

But through indolence and lack of obedience she has had the long silken locks of her separation cut until they are thin and uneven. It is not the world that has cut her hair, it is not sinners who have weakened and marred her separation unto her Lord; it is those who are called by His name, and who afterward smote her when she sought Him whom her soul still loved. Through disobedience, her teeth of faith have not been feeding upon the Word of God and upon the living Word. They have become weak because she has not been feeding upon His Word as faithfully as she did before, nor has she been drawing down answers to prayers.

Through the admiration of others, she has lost some of her shamefacedness and humility; she has become somewhat self-satisfied, not with her beauty, but with her knowledge of her Lord; not with herself, but because she knows His voice and because she has entered into a deeper relation with Him than those about her have experienced.

The Bridegroom does not speak of those symbols of the bride's beauty that are along the line of cleansing and purity,

of separation from the world as one bearing His name; but He speaks of that which has been marred through her slumber. He begins to deal with her, by withdrawing the very experiences through which she has become self-confident. As He withdraws His presence and remains silent to her cries and prayers, she quickly arises; and there is nothing that can hold her back until she has again overtaken Him, and again hears His voice and beholds His beauty.

As the watchmen smite her and cast out her name as evil, her hair again begins to grow. As she searches the Scriptures and claims the promises of God, as she seeks and receives a clearer revelation and knowledge of the living Word, Christ Jesus, her teeth of faith begin to get strong and even. The humiliation and indignity, which she suffers as she hastens here and there searching for her Beloved, bring to her brow the beauteous blush of the piece of pomegranate; and this humility and modesty are hidden and shaded by her locks of separation.

After repenting and seeking Him in contrition, after suffering for His sake and refusing to be turned aside by the opposition and blows of the watchmen, her Beloved again speaks to her. His approval rests upon her, and now His words of commendation are far beyond those that He spoke before. Never before has He compared her to the beautiful city of Tirzah. She had been planted upon the Mount of God where all eyes could behold her, but she was not yet steadfast. While her light had been bright, it had not become steady, and strong enough to pierce through the shadows of the valleys around her. Her life did not bring conviction upon those who knew not her Lord, and upon those who were not faithfully following Him. Before she had followed Him through the darkness and the streets, she was more timid and could be more easily deceived; she could be more easily turned aside so that her light would be dim, if not hidden.

Never before has the Bridegroom likened her to the beau-

tiful, compact Jerusalem; nor has He spoken of the banners that are floating above her, which make her like bannered hosts of soldiers in a fortified city. Since she arose and opened the door, since she went out into the night of His withdrawal, she has attained to greater stability and brightness of light; she has entered into greater unity and fellowship with Him and with the other virgins of the bride; she has added many banners to those she already had. Her hair has again become long and beautiful like a flock of goats lying along the side of Mount Gilead; her teeth have been strengthened, and have become white like a flock of ewes, which are come up from the washing; her humility, hidden away by her locks of separation and consecration, has been perfected.

There is nothing that helps or hinders us getting God's best, as does this robe of humility; if we have that, all else shall be added to us. When we are small enough, we shall be in a place where God can give us all He has for us; and if we are willing to remain small and unknown, we are where He can glorify Himself through us. There is nothing so deceiving as the loss of humility, and that feeling of nothingness that comes through having put on real humility. God's people rarely ever realize the dangers that beset the paths of those who have commenced to put on the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit.

At first, the unconsciousness of that which God is doing, protects the child with whom God is dealing from becoming proud that he is humble. But if the devil can insinuate into his heart the consciousness that he is becoming humble, there is the most subtle danger of becoming puffed up and exalted over the very thing that God is working in the heart and in the life. Unfortunately, the enemy many times uses the children of God who are admiring and rejoicing over what God is doing in another's life, to destroy the work of the Spirit; and to stop or hinder the inward adorning of humility that God is imparting.

This kind of pride too often takes possession of God's children, and there is nothing more difficult than for such an one to realize that spiritual pride has taken hold of him. Only God can deal with spiritual pride, and the confidence that comes from having had precious experiences with the Lord; both of these dangers beset the paths of those who are following on to know the Lord and to have His best. Almost without exception, the Lord must needs take such an one through grievous, humiliating processes, such as the bride is here described as having gone through.

The "better than thou" feeling that lays hold of God's children; the feeling of superiority that comes with the knowledge of the Lord and seeing the failures of others along the lines where we are strong, creep upon us unnoticed and unsuspected. The satisfaction in the knowledge and the touch that we have had with the Lord at some past time; the unconscious conviction that we are favored of the Lord, are all sure indications of the loss of the beautiful humility and shamedfacedness, which is symbolized by the piece of the delicate red and white pomegranate.

6:8-9. **"There are threescore queens, and forescore concubines, and virgins without number."** The same thought that was brought out in the second chapter of this book, is expressed in the three following verses. Though there are threescore ("an indefinite" number) queens, and fourscore ("an innumerable" company) concubines, together with a vast number of virgins, the Bridegroom declares that His dove is but one. In the second chapter, we are told that all the daughters are as thorns when compared to His love, who is the only lily. All the queens and concubines of earthly courts, all the virgins of earth are only a multitude, and of no importance as compared to that multitude in glistering white that make up the one bride.

The expressions, "but one," and "only one," in the ninth

verse, are both translated from the same word in the original language. Their meaning throws much light upon the real significance of Christ's prayer as recorded in John seventeen; also upon the place divine unity must hold in the company of the bride of Christ. It also brings out the harmony between the points just mentioned and the verses in the Song of Solomon that we are now considering.

"But one" means "the united one; to unify or make one." This clearly brings out the thought that there are many in the bride of Christ, but they are so united, or unified, as to make "but one." Many look upon this as unimportant, but the Bridegroom has told us that His bride shall be brought together in such perfect unity as will make her one; and we shall do well to take this as a solemn warning. It was because of the importance of the church's unity that Christ prayed as He did for His followers just before His crucifixion. "I pray . . . that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; . . . the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given unto them; that they may be one, even as We are One" (John 17:21, 22).

The Lord knew that those who should be in the bride must be brought into perfect unity in Him and with one another. It was because they must be bound together and made one if they would be in the bride, that the Lord prayed as He did for them. There could be nothing of the flesh or of earth to cause division in that fair company; and His heart's desire was, that all the redeemed might be thus united and be part of His bride.

The only unity that is spoken of in God's Word, is divine unity; and many do not know how divine unity is perfected. The passage quoted above, makes it very clear. We are one in Christ; not through yielding to others and compromising the Truth is divine unity perfected. When there is a difference of opinion in non-essentials, or in personal taste

and opinions; when it concerns something in our lives, in which the glory and truth of God are not at stake, it is wholesome and a profitable spiritual exercise to yield one to the other.

But in order to be brought into this perfect unity that makes the bride of Christ "One," there must be an abandonment to the control of God, and a putting away of the flesh and all error. As we walk in the light of the Truth as it is in Jesus, we shall have the mind of Christ. Only as we have the mind of Christ can we be of the same mind one with the other. When every thought is brought into captivity unto the obedience of Christ, we shall be brought into perfect unity with one another; standing fast "In one spirit, with one soul striving for the faith of the gospel" (Phil. 1:27). And when we are thus perfected in Christ, we shall march on after the Princely Leader of our salvation, keeping step like a perfectly trained army, which moves and stands still at the command of their captain.

Each virgin of the bride will be looking to Jesus and not to one another; and it is precious and safe to look to Him alone. When we look to one another, it is either for help or to criticise. Even though God works through the members of Christ to the upbuilding of the whole body (Eph. 4:15), the glory belongs to Him; and only when our eyes are upon Jesus do we have the grace to give Him all the glory.

When we look to Him alone, we are in no danger of letting some one get between us and the Lord. It matters not how we watch and scrutinize Him, we can never detect one defect in Him to criticise; but in the most perfect saint, we can see defects if we are looking for them. As each member of Christ's body moves at His command, speaks and keeps silent at His command, all the members move and work together in harmony and unity. There is no getting into one another's way, nor getting into one another's place; neither is there any de-

sire to do so, nor can there be envy over each other's service to the Lord.

Those in the bride shall be bound together in such perfect unity and love, that none will be able to find the least place of separation. There will never be any God-given unity in its full perfection, outside of the bride of Jesus Christ. Only through an experimental knowledge of this unity with Jesus Christ can a company be bound together, and be brought into real divine unity with one another.

As each virgin in the bride is controlled by the Spirit, all are indwelt and controlled by God; as each virgin is all-glorious within, all are glorified, and Jehovah becomes the wall of fire round about and the glory within. As the gospel of Jesus Christ is made flesh in each one, all are found to be living epistles seen and read of all men; as each virgin is perfected into the image of Jesus Christ, all shall make up the one who will be worthy to sit with Him upon His throne.

And as the will and purposes of God are worked out in each one, all shall come together and make up the undefiled and spotless bride of the Lamb. Though this unity does not come from trying to be one with one another, but by being one with the Lord, as we enter into our union with Him, we are united with each other in the perfect unity which is born in Him and given by Him.

The word, "choice," and the root from which the word is taken, mean "pure, clear, clean; clarified, made bright and polished, purged." This precious meaning throws light upon this Scripture, and harmonizes with the teaching of other parts of the Word concerning the bride of the Lamb. The mother of all the redeemed is the new Jerusalem; we are told in Gal. 4:26 that the Jerusalem which is above is the mother of us all. Though many are redeemed, the thought is here implied, that only those who are united and unified so as to make one, shall make up the bride of Christ. When this one is prepared, she will be "the choice one of her that bare her."

What precious revelations God has given us concerning the preparation of this company that is to sit with Christ upon His throne. The unity must be perfected so that the virgins are, indeed, only one in Jesus Christ. Not only must this be done, but every virgin must be made spotless, pure and transparent. Each one must be purged and polished and made bright, if she would belong to "the choice one of her that bare her." Though there are many honorable women, there is only one bride. Though kings' daughters are among His honorable women, it is the bride who is in gold of Ophir, and she alone stands at the right hand of the King of Glory.

It is they who forget their father's house, and yield to the process that will make their lives conformable to the Truth of God; it is they who have the mind of Christ that will be brought into divine unity. It is they who yield to the cleansing and polishing hand of God that will stand at the right hand of the King of kings and Lord of lords. As they forget their father's house, their locks of separation will be long and uncut. "So will the King desire thy beauty; for He is thy Lord; and reverence thou Him" (Ps. 45:11).

The unslumbering eyes of the doves must be hers; it matters not how dark it may be just before the dawn, her eyes must not grow weary of looking for His Coming, and her heart must not become cold so that she will not love His appearing. Her teeth must be white, untouched by decay, unbroken by feeding upon other than the Word. Those who are still babes because of indolence, and inexperience of the Word of righteousness, who are still feeding upon milk and have no teeth of faith with which to masticate the Truth of God and claim the promises, will not be in the company.

The bride must have pure, healthy lips, which are ever under the blood of Christ. Her mouth must give forth only sweetness, whether in speech seasoned with salt, or in silence which is golden. Her humility must clothe and adorn her

behind her locks of separation. Around her neck must hang the weapons which her Lord has provided for her, and she must be adding to these weapons the trophies of victory, which also appear upon her neck. Her breastplate of faith and love must ever cover her breast, and must be perfect if she would be the bride of the Lamb.

The precious part of this is, that it is not imagination, but it is all an eternal reality. Not only are the virgins of the bride made one in Christ, but they are made one with Christ; for He is the Head and they are "members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones" (Eph. 5:30).

"The daughters saw her, and called her blessed; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her." All the honorable on earth, all those who could have been in the bride and were not, all the hosts of Heaven, every creature in Heaven and upon earth, shall behold her, even as they shall look upon the Christ when He comes to put all things under His feet. Those who love God will rejoice in her brightness, those who could have been in this blest company, will rejoice that she has attained to that which they have missed. They will call her blessed, they will praise her; not because of herself, but because she shows forth the handiwork of God and is to His praise and glory as she bears the image of His Son.

6:10. **"Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, terrible as an army with banners?"** It is the daughters of Jerusalem who are here speaking. Their questioning and amazement reveal the change that has come to the bride; they are seeing something upon her and in her that they have never seen before. They cannot understand that illumination which is beginning to shine from within the bride of the Lamb, and which can only be likened to the first rays of dawn that tinge and light up the sky in the early morning. They discern that this light, which is

beginning to appear with such beauty upon her life, is not from herself; but it is a supernatural light that is hidden away within the earthen vessel.

The virgins of the bride are in different stages of perfection and preparation, like stones that are being prepared in the quarry. Some are almost perfected, while others have only just been cut out of the rock; but all will be perfect and symmetrical before they are fitted into the places in the building for which they were prepared.

This graduation of preparation is set forth here by the light that illuminates and reflects upon heavenly bodies. First, the bride shows the reflection of her Lord upon her, as the sky reflects the rays of the sun in early morning, while as yet it has not risen. The sky is not light in itself, but it shines with borrowed light. Some of the virgins have only entered into the place where they begin to reflect their Lord, and therefore are like the sky in early dawn.

Others have been in this race longer and are shining forth as fair as the moon. They are brighter than those rays of early dawn, which begin to lighten the sky; they are shining with greater light, clear, pure, and beautiful; yet with reflected light, having no glory of their own. There is not the fullness of light and the stability that will be theirs when they have fully put on Jesus Christ and are clothed in the Sun of righteousness.

The bride not only looks forth as the dawn, fair as the moon; but she is clear as the sun. "The path of the righteous is as the light of dawn, going on and brightening unto the full midday." (Prov. 4:18, literal translation.) Thus it is with the bride of the Lamb, and should be with all believers. From the faint reflection of early dawn, they should go on to the brightness of the moon, even though the light of the moon is variable and intermittent, which is often the case with the redeemed until they are perfected. But this should also give

way to the clearness and beauty of the sun, which symbolizes the full beauty and reflection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"We all, with unveiled face reflecting as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transfigured into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18). We are told that at the end shall "The righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13:43). And God made the two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: He made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of heaven to give light upon earth" (Gen. 1:16, 17). The sun and the moon have been given to shine and give light upon earth; and the Church of Jesus Christ has been redeemed and appointed to shine and give light in this dark world.

Thus it is with the ripe and perfected saint that shines forth with never-varying light as the clear shining after rain. In the twelfth chapter of Revelation, we read of a great sign seen in Heaven; a woman arrayed with the sun, and the moon under her feet and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. Twelve is a note of the church universal; and the twelve stars for a crown show forth the last great victory and glory which, through the church, God will get to Himself. It is as we put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and are transfigured into His image from glory to glory, that we are clothed with the sun.

How great is the provision God has made for us, that we should be clothed in the sun and shine with steady and ever-increasing glory, until time merges into Eternity, and we are like Him because we see Him as He is. The more we put Him on and the brighter we shine with His reflected glory, the more terror shall we bring upon the hosts of the enemy; the powers of darkness cannot bear the holy light of God, though it is only reflected.

"Terrible as an army with banners." At the first glance,

it would appear that this description is the same as the Bridegroom gives in the fourth verse; but while the words are the same, we see by the context that the meaning is different. In the fourth verse, the Bridegroom compares the bride to the most majestic and beautiful of earthly objects. He looks down upon earth and draws His comparisons from Tirzah, Jerusalem, and a host of bannered soldiers. The daughters of Jerusalem look up to the heavens and compare the bride to the heavenly bodies.

It would be inconsistent for the bride to be compared in the same description, to the dawn, the moon and the sun, and to hosts of earthly soldiers with banners. Therefore the conclusion is that this reference is not to earthly hosts of victorious soldiers, but to the heavenly hosts of both stars and angels. This thought, which is accepted by most Bible students, is brought out by many other portions of Scripture.

In Rev. 19:14, we are told of the white horse, coming forth out of Heaven with one upon him called the Faithful and True; "And the armies which are in Heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and pure." In Dan. 12:3: "They that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever." The stars are used as the great symbol of the ransomed. We are told in 1 Cor. 15:41: "One star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection from the dead." The stars that the Lord held in His hand in Rev. 1:20, were the angels, or the ministers of the churches.

Sometimes we confine our ideas of an army to the armies of earth, but the armies of Heaven are infinitely beyond those of this world; and because of the hosts of God's armies, He is called Jehovah Sabaoth; i. e., the Lord of Hosts. "Whose host all creatures are whether the host of Heaven, or the angels and ministers of the Lord; or the stars and planets

which are as an army ranged in battle-array, and performing the will of God" (Cruden).

When the king of Syria sent horses and chariots to take Elisha, his servant was filled with fear. And Elisha prayed that Jehovah would open his eyes that he might see. And Jehovah opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. The bride of the Lamb is not only terrible as earthly bannered hosts, but she is terrible as the heavenly bannered hosts; for He who leads her forth to battle is the Lord of Sabaoth.

He is Lord of all the hosts of Heaven and earth, and before Him and His hosts, all the hosts of darkness must fall back; before the chariots of God, none can stand. When she is clothed with the sun, and has so put on Jesus Christ that she is hid with Him in God, all enemies who would attack her, must attack Him first; and there shall be myriads of banners added to those already floating above her, and she shall shine forth like the innumerable suns, which deck the heavens.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE GARDEN OF NUTS. THE BRIDE CAUGHT AWAY AMONG THE OVERCOMERS. 6:11-13.

This is the third garden that is mentioned in the book. The first, which is found in ch. 2:12, is the garden of flowers and immature fruit, which shows forth late spring and early summer. In this first garden, everything gives promise of a full harvest, but nothing is perfected. The second garden is the garden of spices, a figure of autumn; and it begins with ch. 5:1. In this garden, all is perfect and ripe, with plenteous spices, which are always associated with the Lord. The third garden is at the end of winter just before spring. There are nuts of the year before; the green plants are about to come out, and the buds on the vines and flowers of the pomegranates are about to appear. As we have before said, "garden" means the Kingdom of Heaven; and the four different descriptions of the gardens, portray the Kingdom of Heaven in different processes of growth and perfection.

6:11. **"I went down into the garden of nuts, to see the green plants of the valley, to see whether the vine budded, and the pomegranates were in flower."** Historically, this is the beginning of the Dispensation of Grace, and the fulfillment of the Word of God concerning the coming of the Messiah and His redemptive work; also the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which began on the day of Pentecost and has continued since that time. The nuts are the promises of God, and it was into a veritable garden of nuts, that Jesus Christ led His disciples after His resurrection.

Before He ascended to the Father: "Beginning from

Moses and from all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scripture the things concerning Himself." "Then opened He their mind, that they might understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:27, 45). "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged" (1 Cor. 2:14). As nuts cannot be eaten, neither do they show the sweetness of the meat within until the shells are broken, so it is with the precious promises and the Word of God. Unless the Lord opens up our understanding, it is impossible to understand aright the Word of God.

It is from man's interpretations of the Word, that so many strange doctrines have been brought forth in all ages. When man brings his human reason and wisdom to bear upon the Word of God, and the Word is not spiritually discerned and interpreted, it can be made to prove almost anything.

When the Spirit, however, who is the Teacher and the one who leads into all truth, reveals God's thought and the real meanings that lie at the root of every line of the Holy Scriptures, such treasures are uncovered as "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man;" and the heart rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory. God reveals to those who love and fear Him, the treasures and promises in this garden of nuts. With deep reverence and gratitude, we praise God that the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God; or, literally, "the depths of God;" and He reveals them to us.

The Word of God has neither sweetness nor juice, neither food nor encouragement, to those who do not feed upon it daily, to those who do not approach it prayerfully and with the determination to come to the sweet, nourishing meat that is hidden away in every hard nut that it contains. To those who yield to God and earnestly seek to claim and possess His promises, to those who earnestly pray that the words of instruction

and counsel may be rightly interpreted, the Word has a charm that increases as one enters more into its mysteries.

The letter (the outer husk or meaning) must be done away before we can arrive at the hidden spiritual meaning, which is symbolized by the kernel of the nut. The letter of the law had no nourishment nor power to redeem one lost soul, any more than the outer shuck of a nut has sweetness or nourishment to sustain life. But when the Holy Spirit opens up the Word, there is sweetness, and nourishment, and power, hidden away at the heart of all God's Word and promises.

Since Jesus Christ came and died, there is power that will give and sustain life: "For how many soever be the promises of God, in Him is the yea: wherefore also through Him is the Amen, unto the glory of God through us" (2 Cor. 1:20). "Seeing that His divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that called us by His own glory and virtue; whereby He granted unto us His precious and exceeding great promises; that through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:3, 4).

God is the only one who can break these hard nuts of His Word, He is the only one who can take away the outside meaning of the letter, and introduce us to the deep spiritual meaning within. With helpless reliance upon Him, we should come to the Word of God; and take heed that no imaginations of our own get in, to adulterate the pure meaning of the Scripture. Let us not draw back and insist upon remaining in only one small corner of the Word of God; but let us be so pliable in His hands, that He can lead us into all the pasture of His promises; and let us take heed that *He* leads us, and that *we* do not try to lead Him.

What a rich pasture has God prepared for us to feed in. One proof that the Bible is the Word of God, is its inexhaustible character. Though generations have studied it, and mil-

lions have pored over it, all those who have fed upon it have not revealed the treasures it contains. After all who have drawn from its riches and attempted to master its deep meanings and contents in the past, the Bible stands today, filled with treasures for all who will come to it in the future. Many times it is hard to break the shell and find the hidden meaning underneath, especially if we have heard the Word read and expounded since we were children, by wise, but disagreeing teachers.

In order to feed upon these precious nuts of the promises and meanings of God's Word, we must begin with the portions that are simple, and where the meanings are plain, and let God lead us on to those that are harder to understand. We must let our faith go out to God and believe that He will open up our understanding that we may understand that which we read. Thus we go from one mystery to another, from one precious passage to another, and as we crack these nuts in God's Word, we find that our teeth of faith become stronger.

At first our faith is so weak, that we are like infants; we can only receive the milk of the first principles. But as we follow the Lord and are diligent in prayer; as we faithfully feed upon God's Word, He enlightens our understanding. We learn to claim His promises as He opens up to us things that our eyes have not seen nor our ears heard, and which have not entered into our hearts.

The bride has gone down into the Vineyard of the Lord, to see whether the tender plants her Father has planted, are coming up. She would see whether the buds are beginning to show on the pomegranate, and whether the signs of spring are to be seen in the Garden of the Lord. Her Beloved has set her to tend part of His vineyard and she would see whether it is thriving, whether it needs some special attention, whether it gives promises of fruit, which she can take up to her Beloved and lay at His feet.

6:12. **"Before I was aware, my soul set me among the chariots of the prince."** Or, "made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib" (literal translation). As she is busy with the tasks that He has given her to do, suddenly she is caught away into His presence. In Ps. 68:17, 18, we are told: "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands upon thousands; the Lord is among them as Sinai, in the sanctuary. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led away captives; thou hast received gifts among men."

Ammi-nadib, is composed of two words compounded; the meaning of the first word is: "Troops or a company of people congregated together and made one;" the meaning of the last word is: "The prince." The meaning of the two words together is: "The people or company, that have become one, and are the chariots, or war chariots, of the prince."

This experience of the bride is not an uplift that lasts for only a short time; one of those times of blessing when we enter into the presence of the Lord, but do not abide there. It means a stepping upward into a fuller control by the Lord, and a more lasting and deeper communion with Him and with the company that has been made one in Him; that company that is called the chariots of the Prince because of their courage and abandonment to the Prince of Peace.

It is when the bride is walking the path of obedience, that she enters the place of rest, which is always a place of greater conflict and yet greater victory. The Lord sometimes calls us aside that we may seek Him and give ourselves to prayer; but it is not when *we* shut ourselves away in caves or in a hermit's cell that we find the chariots of the Prince and are caught away into that company that has been made one in Christ Jesus. If we go on with Him and walk in obedience, we shall see no more decrease in our touch with Him and in our prayer life when we are busy in His vineyard, than when we are giving ourselves to prayer alone.

The bride has gone down into His Vineyard, or garden, which in this book are the same. She does not look upon it as her garden, neither does she consider it a burden and duty that she must perform as would a slave. But her heart longs for the tender buds to come out; for the flowers and fruit of the pomegranate to appear. She would watch the plants God has planted and those He may plant in His garden, she would tenderly care for them that there may be fruit to bring to the Heavenly Solomon at harvest time. It is with a full heart, that she has gone down into the garden of nuts. She would let her faith go up with greater unction that she may pluck and partake of every promise concerning God's will and willingness which she finds in this garden.

In the second chapter, the Bridegroom likens the bride to the horses in Pharaoh's chariots, and here she describes the flight of her spirit, and compares it to the swiftness of the chariots of the Lord. All God calls us to do in His Vineyard takes its proper place when we apprehend that God has chosen us for one purpose alone; and that is, that we may be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29). All "Christian work" sinks into its rightful place when we realize that the real work of God, without which all other Christian work is in vain, is to believe upon Him whom God hath sent (John 6:29). All else we may do is in vain if we do not set our faces to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. Nothing else will profit us if we fail to do the work of God, which is to so believe upon Jesus Christ, that in all things, we are made more than conquerors through His finished work upon Calvary.

How many of God's servants let the so-called work of the Lord steal away the anointing and unction upon their own souls. Many times, when the servants of the Lord are not going on with Him themselves and are really more or less backslidden, they let the energy and activity of teaching,

preaching, and "The work" (?), soothe them into a vain belief that this activity is really speed in following Jesus Christ. This is one of the easiest ways in which the enemy deceives God's people and servants.

Not only did the bride go down into the garden to see the green plants of the valley, the buds on the vine, and the flowers of the pomegranate, but she went into the garden of nuts. Even while she was looking after His business, she picked, and fed upon the precious and exceeding great promises of the Word of God. She did not let her own soul starve while she hurried about in the flesh, trying to tend the souls of others.

Upon the Word of God and upon her Beloved, she meditated day and night. She was communing with Him and entering in with increased abandonment and zeal, when her soul was caught away with divine swiftness into the company and chariots which were especially chosen for the Prince. In sweet, and lasting abandonment, she is experiencing that though she is in the world, she is not of it.

She is still tabernacling in the body of her humiliation. The earthly tent, in which she is dwelling as a pilgrim and a stranger, still moves about among men. But her spirit has become lost in her Beloved, and she can say with exultation: "If the earthly house of my tabernacle be dissolved, I have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens (2 Cor. 5:1). This is a lasting and upward flight that is beyond all that she has had before; so unearthly is she becoming, that those around her discern that a mysterious and wonderful thing has happened to her; for they cry:

6:13. **"Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee."** With holy awe, the daughters of Jerusalem behold the bride, whose spirit is caught away into such deep separation and holy boldness and courage, as can only belong to the overcomer. They do not understand what has happened; but they know that a separation has taken

place between her and them, which is more than mere bodily separation. Although she is living and moving among them, and they see her at her earthly tasks and God-given service, they realize that the bride has mounted up beyond them and their understanding.

Many times, it is most grievous and perplexing to those who know not the Lord, and who cannot understand the workings and separating processes of the Spirit of God, to have one who is near and dear to them in the flesh, separated from them in the Spirit. Though the body with its personality, is still in the home, it is as though the loved one were not there. In such cases, how often do they who are watching the lives of those who are following hard after the Lord, entreat them that they will return; that they will again be unto them as they were once.

When a virgin has entered into this experience, she has counted all things but loss, and suffered the loss of all things for her precious Lord. She has gone so far with her Lord, that earth and friends fade away in the exceeding brightness of her vision of Christ. Her eyes are fixed with a steadfast gaze upon Him who has called her, who has died for her, who has separated her unto Himself. He has caught her away and set her in the ranks of the chariots of the Lord, even among the company of overcomers who go out in the Name of the Lord, and to conquer.

There is one significant and important fact concerning this experience of the bride, of which we may well take notice. It is not while she is neglecting the Word of God and caring nothing for the welfare of those about her, that she enters into this great experience; nor is it when she is absorbed in "Christian work" and self-imposed tasks. Through chastening and suffering, she has been brought to the place where she is given over more and more to the Lord, and where she only seeks to do His will.

No matter what she is doing, her communion with Him and her devotion to Him are increasing all the time. Not in babyhood are we able to continually abide in His presence, regardless of our surroundings and that which we are doing. Not when we serve Him with intermittent zeal does our own soul grow and thrive; not when we are indifferent are we watered from the presence of the Lord. It is after we have been subdued, refined, and chastened; when love of self and the world is gone, that we learn to abide in touch with Him at all times, and in all places or surroundings.

It is not until she is thus caught away into the company of those who are as one troop or army, and to the chariots of the Messiah, that those about her call her by the name, "Shulamite," which is peculiarly the name of the bride of Solomon. "Shulamite" is the feminine of "Solomon" and means the daughter of peace. It is "the daughter of peace" who will be the consort of "the Prince of Peace." She receives, as her right, this new name which they apply to her, and is unconscious that this is the first time they have addressed her as the Shulamite; but with humble dignity, she accepts the name that sets forth her oneness with Him.

"Why will ye look upon the Shulamite, as upon the dance of Mahanaim," or "as it were upon the company of two armies?" There are two expositions of this verse, which are generally accepted by most Bible students. One of which is, that "the company of two armies" is a figure of the redeemed; one company of which is in Heaven, and the other still upon earth. The second interpretation is, that it refers to the two hosts, or armies, of light and darkness, and the conflict between them.

Whichever meaning is accepted, there is a thought of continual warfare. Christ said: "Think not that I came to send peace on the earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man at variance against his

father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law: and a man's foes shall be they of his own household" (Matt. 10:34-36). The second exposition makes the two armies refer to the two hosts of light and darkness, and the warfare between the army of the Lord and the army of Satan, in which the believer is the battle field.

The Christian life is always pictured as a battle and conflict. The harder we follow after the Lord and the higher we are caught away into His presence, the fiercer the conflict that the enemy brings against us, and the harder the enemy is after us to hinder us going on unto the fullness of God. It is not only in the conflict against the world and the flesh, that we are tested, for only in spiritual childhood are our battles confined to this territory; it is when we are nearly perfected, that we enter into the fiercest conflict. It is against those that have set their faces to get God's best, that the devil brings his bitterest assaults. With relentless hatred, he tries in every way to keep them from taking the last steps that will bring them into the ranks of the overcomers. While there is fierce, and sometimes awful conflict going on over us as the battle grounds, when we hide away in Jesus Christ and abide there, there is a peace within, which flows like a river. It is the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, that garrisons and keeps guard at the doors of our hearts. The enemy may rage and attack us on the outside, but if we abide in our hiding-place, and our hearts are thus guarded, he cannot bring to our hearts one fear or feeling of dismay.

Oh, wonderful peace! that abides and flows like rivers within our souls, watering every channel of our lives; that brings sweetness and assurance within when the conflict is raging without, and when the enemy would besiege us with all his army of darkness! God does not let the devil at-

tack the weak soul, or babe, in this way; but they that enter into these fierce battles are those who have been caught away among the war chariots of the Lord.

It is a mistake to assure young, zealous Christians, that they will find only roses upon the path that leads to their Father's house. Nowhere can we gather sweet flowers and sweet spices to take up to our Beloved, but in this wilderness path; but let us not forget the dangers that surround every shrub and tree upon which these eternal flowers and heavenly spices grow. Many times the enemy sets snares for our feet; he comes out against us as a roaring lion; he sends the birds of prey that they may torment us. But if we keep hidden in our Beloved, we shall never be defeated although we shall have conflict.

The peace of God is as different from the peace of circumstances, which those have who are living upon low level, as Heaven is different from earth. It is nearly always in the hard conflict and persecution, that the peace of God flourishes and is perfected. Many times, God's children who are living upon a low plain, mistake the peace that comes because the enemy finds nothing in their lives to oppose, for the peace of God. Though this precious peace of God extends and is manifested without, we cannot determine the perfection of our peace by the way the devil lets us alone. This Heavenly peace that comes down to us from God, is always found within; and God will set it before the doors of our hearts as a sentinel watching a treasure if we yield and are quiet in Him, if we take refuge in Him.

In the life of the Christian soldier, there is also the conflict that is fought through prevailing prayer, and the battles we enter as we contend earnestly for the Faith once for all delivered unto the saints. Truly, with those who are going through with Jesus and who have set their faces to become overcomers, the conflict is as the company of two

armies, which are engaged in a death struggle and a hand to hand fight. "But thanks be unto God, who always leadeth us in triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest through us the savor of His knowledge in every place. For we are a sweet savor of Christ unto God, both in them that are saved and in them that perish."

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE BRIDE'S BEAUTY AS SEEN BY THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM. 7:1-3.

7:1. "How beautiful are thy feet in sandals, O prince's daughter!" It is the daughters of Jerusalem who are speaking now, and they begin their description with the feet of the bride, because they have found that "Beautiful upon the mountains, are the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth." In the preceding verses, the bride has been caught away into the presence of the Lord.

It is only when we have entered into this permanent relation with the Lord, when we are more completely separated unto Him and are more continuously living and walking in the Spirit, that we can bring to hungry souls the living water of the gospel of peace. Unless we are living this gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation and victory, we cannot give it out to others so that they can live it and have it bear fruit to the glory of God.

The bride's feet are not naked nor poorly clad. She has so put to the test the Truth of the gospel, and her faith has so appropriated it into her life; she has so yielded to the working of God, that her feet are perfectly shod with the "Preparation of the gospel of peace." And it is because of the sandals that adorn her feet, that they are so beautiful. God always clothes our feet and prepares them to walk in the path that He has marked out for us to travel.

We are commanded to have our feet shod with the

preparation of the gospel of peace (Eph. 6:15). This does not, as many believe, apply exclusively to preachers and teachers being prepared to preach the gospel; although it means this too. The real significance of this protection and clothing for the feet of the Christian, is the perfect knowledge and appropriation of the gospel into the life, through which believers go on from victory to victory. As they themselves enter in, they receive utterance and power to impart its treasures to others.

It is through our union with Jesus Christ in His finished work on Calvary, that we are able to put off the natural and put on His attributes. As we do this, we become strengthened to press on in the race; we become strong in the battles; and thus, this figure, which is used both in S. of Sol. 7:1 and in Eph. 6:15, really becomes our experience. In the latter Scripture, the figure is taken from the military shoes that the Roman soldiers wore; and which were so perfectly fitted to their feet and adapted to their calling as soldiers, that there could be no slipping nor discomfort through improper and ill-fitting shoes.

The feet of the bride of Christ are beautiful as she carries the good news of Christ's finished work to those who know Him not, or to those who know Him but little. There is another translation of this verse: "How beautiful are thy goings (that is, "footsteps or walk") in sandals." As she goes about her Beloved's vineyard and about His business, in all things, her daily walk is worthy of Him; every step is beautiful in the eyes of those who behold her. There are no inconsistencies in her life; there are no uncertain steps, no wavering, no sliding back. She has put on the Truth of the gospel so perfectly, that her feet are covered, and her steps are firm.

These shoes of the preparation of the gospel of peace have living power in them to hold our feet from slipping,

or getting out of the path. We must refuse all slipshod footgear of error; we must refuse to have our feet so thinly shod because of not appropriating the Word of God, that every sharp rock will pierce our feet, and every pebble will turn them out of the way. We must set our faces to have the Truth, all the Truth, and nothing but the Truth. We must not only know it with our heads, but we must so live it out in our lives, that our feet shall be perfectly shod with these wonderful and magical sandals that our Lord has prepared for us to wear.

It is not long ago since the bride had laid aside her shoes; and when her Beloved knocked, she was afraid of soiling her feet with the dust from the floor. Since then, she has hastened about the streets and byways searching for her Beloved; she has been wounded and smitten; her feet have been bruised. Now we see her with the sandals of the preparation of the gospel of peace perfectly covering and fitted to her feet; and this has come from a greater revelation of the Truth, and a deeper entrance into it.

She has gone down into the garden of nuts to look after the vineyard of her Beloved. She has proven that, "How many soever be the promises of God, in Him is the yea; wherefore also through Him is the Amen, unto the glory of God through us." She has picked many of the nuts of the promises of God, and, by the grace of God, she has broken them open with the hammer of faith, and has partaken of the sweet kernel within.

Those about her have seen her steadfast walk, they have seen how beautiful her life has been. When she comes to them with the good news of what Jesus Christ has done upon the Cross of Calvary, they know that she has first partaken of the gospel, which she is bringing them. They exclaim: "How beautiful are thy goings, how beautiful are thy feet in these strong and shapely sandals of the gospel of Jesus Christ!" Those about us are judging us by our daily walk.

The one who preaches and teaches, but does not partake of what he gives forth; who testifies to one thing and lives another, has little or no influence when he attempts to bring to others the Truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. None judge our knowledge of God by our knowledge of the Bible, by our profession and our testimonies. The gospel must be working out in our lives, and manifested in our daily walk in the home and before those who see us the most.

Only the Truth, perfectly put on through faith in Jesus Christ, can protect our feet from the stones and the sharp corners that meet us at nearly every step. When we have on these perfectly fitting sandals of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which God has provided for us, and we keep in the will of God, we can walk through every danger, and no harm can come nigh us. No serpent can bite through these sandals, neither can any stone cut the foot; the feet of one thus protected cannot be turned aside, nor can they be caught in the nets and traps along the path. They will not slip into the ditch, nor get so far out of the way that they will sink into the mire.

It is wonderful how God works upon each one of us to perfectly prepare our feet for the path He has marked out for us. If the road is going to be hard and rough, if there are going to be many rocks and thorns, God leads us along gradually; giving us opportunities to appropriate the power in the gospel, and to have our faith perfected. In this way and with every test, our feet are covered more perfectly and securely. If we are obedient and faithful, we shall find that the preparation of the gospel of peace perfectly protects and perfectly equips us for whatever we must pass through.

"Thy rounded thighs are like jewels, the work of the **hands of a skillful workman.**" As in many portions of the Scripture, the description of the different parts of the body

is really a description of the covering with which they are adorned. And these descriptions symbolize the beauties and perfections of the Church of Jesus Christ. This significance enters into the first two verses of this chapter in which the daughters of Jerusalem describe the bride of Christ. There are other precious meanings also.

In this difficult passage, difficult because of the evil tendencies of the human mind, we must ever remember that it is not one virgin that is described, but the company of virgins who make up the bride. Spiritually, there are many meanings that could apply and edify each one who is joined to the Lord; but this is a description of the Church of Jesus Christ, which is set forth under the figure of the perfect beauty and full development, also the adorning of the female form. The bride of Jesus Christ is always pictured as feminine, but she is composed of many virgins; and here we behold her in her beauty, purity, and full development, worthy in His worthiness.

The description of the "rounded thighs," the "body," the "waist," are beautifully given under other figures in Ephesians, where the body of Christ is described. "That we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error; but speaking truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him, who is the head, even Christ; from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love" (Eph. 4:14-16). The same thought is brought out concerning the Church, which is the body of Christ, in Col. 2:19. "Not holding fast the Head, from whom all the body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increaseth with the increase of God."

The first and primary thought, from which all others are tributary, is the perfect working together and the united strength, which is operative in the Church through every joint and sinew; every part doing its work. The thigh is the part of the leg in which lies the strength for walking and running; or, in other words, it is the seat of strength for our daily walk. Not only that, it is the part that is joined to the body by the important hip joint. And it is as this joint works freely, as the thigh is perfectly developed and made strong and healthy through exercise, that the whole body is carried about.

If the thigh is weak and uncertain, if the joint is stiff or diseased, the whole body suffers. But it shall not be so with the bride of Jesus Christ. Every joint shall be strong and healthy, with no stiffness nor disease. The thigh, the seat of strength for her daily walk, shall be strong and steadfast, and able to bear about the whole body. Thus shall it supply the part allotted to it toward the building up of the body of Christ in love.

Not only is this the emblem of steadfastness and strength in our walk and steps, but about the hips, or loins, appears the girdle of Truth, which is described by the word, "jewels." In Eph. 6:14, we are commanded to put on this girdle of Truth: "Stand fast therefore, having girded your loins with truth." It is this girdle that must hold every loose, flowing end of our wills, our doctrines, and our lives, so that our feet shall not become entangled. As we run the race that God has set before us, nothing but the Truth of God can hold us steady and keep our feet from stumbling. And it is as each virgin is girded by the Truth of the gospel, that all shall be girded and shall be held steadfast.

We must look carefully that not one thread of fanaticism, not one thread of error or unworthy living is found in this girdle. In the heat of the race, when our steps need to be

the firmest, every thread in our girdle that is not of God and His Truth, will break; and we shall fail to attain unto the prize through being turned aside and stumbling. Error cannot stand the strain of the upward path over which the soul must travel to God's best. Error will not hold together and keep our feet from slipping in the dangerous passes, in the slippery places. Only a girdle, woven by the hand of God out of the Truths of God, can hold us firm as we go down the steep path into the valley of humiliation and abasement. Only God's girdle of Truth can hold us steadfast and keep us from falling as we cross the ravines and climb the rocks; as we pass through the deep waters, and face the storms that we shall encounter if we go through to the glory of God.

7:2. **"Thy body is like a round goblet wherein no mingled wine is wanting."** The body, or the navel, is compared to a goblet filled to overflowing with red wine, and in this, we see the figure of that which fastens the girdle together. This, it is agreed by all Bible students, is a description of the ruby set clasp that holds the girdle in place and makes it firm and unmovable. And the wine or the ruby clasp, symbolizes the New Wine of the Kingdom. Only through the spilt blood of Jesus Christ, can the bride put on the girdle of the Truth of God, which binds the loins and holds firm the goings.

A girdle clasp fastens and holds the girdle tight; and it is as we partake in the death of Christ, daily bearing about in our body the dying of Christ, that His life becomes manifested. Thus, the girdle of Truth is put on and fastened securely, so that our steps are held firm. We can gird our daily walk with human goodness or with man's theories; we can draw around us the dying fig leaves of man's efforts and strength; we can fasten it with the clasp of human resolutions. But at the first attack of the enemy, at the first strain in passing over obstacles, the girdle will give way and the

clasp will be shattered; and we shall be left defeated, naked, undone.

The precious gospel of Jesus Christ alone is the power of God unto salvation unto everyone that believeth; not only salvation from hell, but a salvation that works every moment of our lives and in every testing that comes up against us. The only way in which this gospel works, is by bringing all loose ends of flesh and error up under this wonderful girdle of Truth, and then letting God draw it so tight by His dealings, that not one end can escape and hang down to impede our progress, or entangle our unwary feet.

It is as we see ourselves crucified with Him upon the Cross of Calvary, it is as we reckon ourselves dead to sin, to unrighteousness, and to the flesh, that the girdle of Truth is secured about our loins by the girdle clasp of the blood, or death of Christ. It is through His death, that we are delivered from all our enemies; it is through partaking in this death, that the resurrection life of Christ is also made operative in our lives. As we are united with Him in His death and resurrection, the Truth becomes flesh in us to the glory of God.

Every Truth of God, when it is made operative in the life, is like a jewel; and the Holy Spirit is the skillful Workman who deals, and teaches, and leads into all Truth, until these jewels of God's Word and Christ's attributes are put on one by one. They are fastened together by daily taking up the cross and following Christ, by ever keeping in the place of death. They are bound and woven together and are held tight by the precious cross, upon which we die daily.

As the bride lives out the gospel day by day, she is enabled to walk in victory; and this full goblet that Christ prepared and filled for her, is brought to others through her ministry. As those who know not the Lord, behold the beautiful girdle and the blood red clasp that holds it together;

as they see the real gospel being lived out by those who are wearing this girdle; as they see their daily walk becoming conformed to the Work of God, they also long to partake of this gospel, and to be thus adorned.

"Thy waist is like a heap of wheat set about with lilies." Jesus Christ is the only wheat in which there is no chaff; and the golden color of the ripe wheat is another emblem of Him. He is the Bread of life, He is the only sustenance upon which believers can feed and thrive. In the forty-fifth Psalm, the queen is described as being clothed in gold of Ophir and standing at the right hand of the king.

No gold is more yellow and beautiful than the golden wheat. In this same psalm, the divine nature is set forth by the gold, as we have considered in one of the previous portions of this Exposition. The yellow wheat sets forth the body of Christ with no mixture of chaff, but with all the food and nutriment, which comes from Him alone. And around this are the lilies which show forth the virgins of the bride of the Lamb.

In this description of the significant adorning of the bride, we have the symbolism of her transfiguration into the image of her Lord, as set forth in the forty-fifth Psalm, where she is portrayed as clothed in the finest gold and beautiful needlework. But we have in the seventh chapter of the Song of Solomon a portrayal of her fruitfulness; the bounteous food, which, through her, is given out to others. We also have the picture of the virgins who are partaking of the wheat.

As we consider each feature of this description in connection with the other, we find another significance. The bride of the Lamb is girded by the girdle of Truth; her girdle is held together by the clasp of the cup of the new covenant in His blood, as she partakes daily in His death and His life is manifested in her. As a grain of wheat, she goes into the ground and dies that she may bring forth much fruit,

and there is a heap of golden wheat which comes up out of her life. She has heavenly manna to give to others, she has a crown of living souls upon her own brow, and these souls are pictured here as feeding upon the heavenly wheat, or manna, through her ministry. "Wherefore, my brethren beloved and longed for, my joy and crown" (Phil. 4:1).

It is given us to put on the white linen of Christ's pure humanity, and be clothed in the fine gold of Ophir. It is given us to have our robes wrought with such purity, and such heavenly whiteness, as daily brings forth in our lives the image of the Lily of the Valleys. God has provided that we may so feed upon the broken body of our Lord, that He will clothe and adorn us. As He gives unto us this hidden manna and we feed upon it, it becomes manifested without. He sends us forth to others that they too may feed upon the food that He gives us, and thus are planted around the body of Christ, which is the Church, the beautiful lilies that He has planted in His garden here below; the lilies He is preparing, and will transplant to the Heavenly Garden. Here they are feeding upon Him and drawing nourishment from Him, who is the only Bread of life.

If God's perfect plan, which He purposed concerning the Church of Jesus Christ, had been carried out, there would be but one Church: "The general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in Heaven." Though there would be many assemblies, they would be of the same mind and would speak the same thing. There would be no cold churches, no nominal church members, no churches walking hand in hand with the world and its pleasures, and many times with its sins.

The above Scripture refers to the real Church of Jesus Christ, which is now hidden away on the earth. If the visible church on earth were embraced in "the general assembly and church of the first-born" and were living up to the re-

quirements as set forth in the Scripture, it would be a burning light for God, sending out light upon the whole world. Each member would be filled with the Holy Spirit, all the members would continually live and walk in the Spirit and would be controlled by Him. All the attributes of Christ would be manifested upon the members of the church individually and collectively.

It would be a Church in which all the gifts of the Spirit would be operating to the glory of God; and every office would be filled by the moving of the Spirit of God, and not by man or a vote of the majority. In such a Church, the preachers and teachers would be filled and anointed by the Holy Spirit, and He would reveal to them the deep things of God, and would give utterance to impart the Truth to others. There would be such an abundance of heavenly wheat as would nourish and feed all the lilies God might plant in His Garden. Thus, they would be prepared for the marriage supper of the Lamb.

It was not God's will that many should be called and only a few chosen. It was not God's will that only a few of those who are called by the name of Christ, should be in the bride. Because of Man's unfaithfulness and infidelity, because of Man's theories, opinions, and stiff-neckedness, God's great plan could not be carried out, and therefore only a few are chosen from the many who are called.

7:3. **"Thy two breasts are like two fawns that are twins of a roe."** Here the daughters of Jerusalem behold the beautiful breastplate of faith and love, which adorns and makes mighty the bride of the Lamb. Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that seek after Him. How precious to God is the divine love, which He is waiting to increase in our hearts and lives day by day. And as our love increases, our faith is perfected,

for faith works by love. This double breastplate of faith and love covers every vital place in our lives, and we find that nothing can come nigh us, neither can any feeling or impulse creep in that will be dishonoring to our Lord (see notes on ch. 4:5).

The difference between the first description of the bride's breastplate, and that which we are now considering, is that in the first description it was the Bridegroom who spoke; and here the daughters of Jerusalem are speaking. It is always thus with the perfection and the maturity into which we gradually enter. The Lord always sees us either better or worse than man sees us. Woe unto us if He sees us worse than we appear before man, for He will make our nakedness manifested when He begins to deal with us. But it is a wholesome condition when He sees us better than we appear to others, for God makes it a means of humiliation to us; and it is like an anchor to our opinions of ourselves, serving to keep us from the fatal condition of being puffed up.

Before any on earth had discerned the faith and love of the bride; before she had enough form or comeliness to be manifested in the eyes of those about her, and to bring forth from them words of praise and admiration, the Lord looked down and saw the breastplate she was beginning to put on, and which was adorning her as she grew into the symmetrical outlines that the bride must wear. He commended her faith and love, and likened them to twins of a roe, which feed among the lilies, and He described her beauty with love and tenderness. She is beautiful in His eyes before her beauty is discerned by the daughters of Jerusalem.

After the tender and precious description and expressions of His love which are found in the fourth chapter, she has the experience of slumber and indolence with its sad results. But now her perfections and fullness of form are seen by those around her. They realize that when she goes to the

Lord and asks for anything, that which she asks surely comes to pass. They see that though she is persecuted and deserted by all, it does not move her so great is her love for her Beloved. They see her encased in this supernatural breastplate of faith and love; they behold her in battle, in prayer, in her daily life.

They see the love that suffers long and, while suffering, is always kind. They see the love that does not envy its brother, but rather rejoices in the brother's good and attainments. They see the love that does not boast of its greatness nor of aught to which it has attained, neither is it puffed up. They see the love that refuses to criticise or speak of another's faults, and is always courteous. They see the love that behaves not itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, and takes not account of evil. They see the love that rejoices not in unrighteousness, nor in the fall and failures of others; the love that does unto others as it would be done by. They see the love that beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. They see the love that never fails, and they see this love being perfected and manifested upon the bride of Christ.

They also see the faith to which nothing is impossible, the faith that can remove mountains; the faith that continually looks to Jesus Christ and His finished work, until the one whom it is adorning, is made more than conqueror through Him who loved her. It is God's will that the Church of Jesus Christ should have this perfectly developed form, which comes from the perfect working of faith and love. Many of God's children go through life with but little faith and love. They receive very few answers to prayer, they read the Bible only a little, and more from a feeling of duty than from love of the Word. They understand very imperfectly that which they read. Love of God is but a flickering, re-

luctant flame within their breasts, and at last their works are burned up and they are saved as by fire.

But all who become overcomers and are in the bride of the Lamb shall have their faith so perfected that it will remove mountains and make the impossible come to pass. Their love shall be perfected toward God unto obedience, and it shall flow out unto edification in their ministry toward man.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE BRIDE, STRONG AND MEDITATIVE, HOLDS THE KING CAPTIVE BY HER MARTYR CROWN. 7:4, 5.

7:4. **"Thy neck is like the tower of ivory."** Ivory is the purest, and one of the most beautiful products of earth: and the neck of the bride, though she is still on the earth, has taken on the purity and whiteness, the strength and stateliness of a tower of ivory. In ch. 4:4, we had the Bridegroom's description of the neck of the bride; and it was set forth there in its strength in Him, and its power of conquest. He has given us "power over all the power of the enemy," and He expects us to use it. Now we have the description of the purity and whiteness, the beauty and Christlike dignity, of the bride's neck as it should ever appear to those about her.

As we have seen in other places, she appears different to her Beloved than to those about her. Before her Lord, she is humble, dependent, and walking softly. Before the enemy, she is fearless and victorious. Before people, she is beautiful and stately, clothed with meditation and a mysterious, heavenly calm.

Her neck is not haughty and outstretched, it is not turning here and there, looking about her in license, which she calls liberty. It is upright with holy, humble dignity; it is firm and erect as regards man, but ever humble toward her Lord. All the spots that once marred its beauty and whiteness, are gone. All the scorch and sunburn that once darkened it, have been washed away by the precious blood; and

its whiteness has been preserved by her separation to her Lord, and by the protecting shadow of His wing. The sun of the world has not been striking her for she has become absorbed by the Sun of righteousness. Every yoke and band, all bondage has been taken off, and she is walking uprightly; she is standing fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has set her free.

"Thine eyes as the pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim." We are not told that her eyes are like waterfalls. We are not told that they are like a river that is rushing seaward, its bosom covered with ripples and waves. We are not told that her eyes are like the ocean, which is moved upon by the moon, and is lashed into fury by winds and storms; which is tempest-beaten, and tossed. They are like the pools of Heshbon; still, deep, quiet; none knowing whence this stillness comes or how it is fed.

When the bride gets her eyes upon Jesus Christ, and her love is fervently going out to Him, Christ begins to reveal Himself more clearly. Even in her physical eyes can be seen a look that comes from abiding in His presence and holding communion with Him. The word, "Bath-rabbim," means, "the daughter, or city, of a multitude." These pools are at the gate of the "city of a multitude," where the throngs hurry by and crowd through the gate into the city; but the water is unmoved, unruffled. The joys and sorrows, the hurry and rush, the ambitions, desires, and distresses of the multitudes have never moved these quiet pools. Men may come and men may go, generations may come and go, but these pools remain the same.

The bride may be at the very gate of Bath-rabbim, but there is a tranquillity in her eyes and appearance that the world can neither give nor take away. Her life is untouched, unmoved, unpolluted by the unrest and turmoil of the world and the crowds around her.

Running water cannot reflect perfectly the blue skies and the bright sun, every reflection upon the river and ocean is distorted and untrue. It is the still pool that reflects the sun and sky in perfect beauty and glory. Sinners cannot look upon the Lord any more than man can look upon the sun continuously; they can only behold Him in the lives of His followers, and they judge our Christ by our lives. If we are like running water, always moving, full of confusion and vacillation, driven by the wind and tossed; lashed into unrest and fury by the storms around us, Christ's image is distorted or entirely hidden by our flesh. Those who "would see Christ," see only us; and even the passing glimpse of His image is not perfect and abiding.

When the peace of God is filling the heart and life, there is no feature that shows it forth as do the eyes. How often, when we have looked into the eyes of those who claimed to walk close to God, have we read such a different story of selfishness, of unconquered desires and impulses, of arrogance and self-esteem. How often, when we have looked for the light of God in the eyes of those who gave forth glowing testimonies of victory and consecration, have we seen the unrest of the flesh, the taint of the world, and the absence of that which has been claimed by the lips.

But when consecrated saints have sounded forth their devotion to their Lord, who can voice the joy and hunger that have filled our hearts, as we looked into their faces and saw the light of Heaven in their eyes. We have seen an unearthly light in the eyes of those who were following hard after the Lord, and our hearts have been ravished by the sight. We have cried to God that this holy light might fall upon us and fill our lives, reflecting upon us and shining from us.

Toward the Bridegroom, the eyes of the bride are as doves' eyes; pure, holy, steadfast; watching for the dawn

of the Eternal Day of His presence. Toward the world, her eyes are like deep pools of quiet waters. None that pass by can see whence these pools are fed; but if they could look down into the depths of her life, they would see springs of living water pouring into her being from the very throne of God. Her eyes are not looking toward the world, but are steadfastly fixed upon her Lord. Before the world they are still, deep, beautiful; reflecting eternal and unseen things and the beauty of her Beloved.

Those about her discern this mysterious, unfathomable light, but they know not whence it is. They do not know it is the reflection of God that they see; and she is unconscious that the image of Jesus Christ is appearing, and looking out from her eyes. Only God knows that this holy light and calm is caused by the outshining of Him who is the Light of the world, and who is dwelling within; and whom she is more and more beholding. She is no longer looking at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen, the things that are eternal.

It is not when we separate ourselves from humanity as do the hermits, or isolate ourselves from mankind as does the recluse, that our eyes become as the pools of Heshbon. This holy rest and meditation are perfected when we are doing the will of God, and faithfully performing the duties He has given us to do, whether in seclusion or in outward confusion and hurry. If God plants us, or sends us out among the throngs, this beautiful meditation can be born and perfected when we are in the midst of a multitude; for it comes from a life hid with Christ in God.

The bride is keeping her eyes upon Jesus so that deep, settled peace of soul and spirit is being perfected within her, and is becoming manifested before the eyes of those who know not God, and to Christians who have not entered into deep experiences with God. When our thoughts have be-

come lost in the thoughts of God, this unearthly reflection is in our eyes. When we are seeking nothing for ourselves excepting to have the will of God done in our lives, we become like still, quiet pools, even in the midst of confusion, and in the noise and rush of a crowd. When every thought has been brought into captivity unto the obedience of Christ, man sees the Christ looking out from our eyes.

Many times, as we have been upon a swiftly moving train, and the night shadows came down upon us, we have seen tiny lights appearing here and there over the landscape, shining and glimmering through the darkness. They appeared like glowworms or fireflies; but their light was not intermittent, and we knew they were from the lights in the houses. Very small were they—just faint, flickering lights; some were a little brighter and larger, but at the most, they were only a tiny overflow from the light within.

Thus, the peace and meditation that look out from the eyes of the bride, are only a small ray of the peace that is guarding her heart and thoughts in Christ Jesus. Her unearthly calm is but a tiny overflow of the peace of God that fills her heart and flows like a river, the peace that passes all understanding. The mysterious reflection in her deep, meditative eyes, is like a distant scene, which we behold through a veil darkly. It is but a passing reflection of the quiet and stillness that fill her heart and life, and which come from having her mind stayed upon God; from ever hearkening and listening to the voice that is as the sound of a gentle stillness.

As she looks away from all else to Jesus Christ, the Captain of her salvation, the unearthly beauty that is seen in her eyes, is but a dim reflection of Him who fills her vision. She is seeing no man save Jesus only. With unveiled face, she is beholding as in a mirror the beauty of the Lord, and is being changed into the same image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord.

Oh, that all about us might see in us the kind of Christ we have! Oh, that God may so work within us, that our faces and eyes shall be like the pools of Heshbon, with heavenly outlook and calm, perfectly reflecting Jesus Christ. Let us pray that all who look upon us shall see how beautiful and fair He is. May the Spirit of God make us like the pools of Heshbon. Though the multitudes sweep by, though there are wars and rumors of wars, though there are tempests and tumults, none of these things move us as we abide, still and hidden away in His presence; and our eyes become like the pools of Heshbon.

It is easy to follow the Lord and look a little like Jesus when there is nothing to disturb us. Even the ocean and the large lakes reflect the skies with some clearness when there is a calm. But He would have us reflect Him as clearly in unfavorable, as in favorable circumstances. He would have the image of Christ shine as bright and clear in the darkest night, as at noonday. He would have Christ's reflection upon us unbroken and undistorted when we come up to hard things and face insurmountable obstacles; when we are maligned and persecuted; when we are hated and slandered for His Name's sake.

He would have meditation and prayer filling our lives, until the light of Him who is the Light, burns bright and steady, shining from our souls and lives.

"Thy nose (or "face") **is like the tower of Lebanon which looketh toward Damascus."** In the eyes of her Beloved and toward Him, her face is like a piece of pomegranate within her locks, showing her humility and submission, her shamefacedness and meekness; but there is no submission nor yielding to the world or to compromise. She submits herself to the Lord, and before Him she is shamefaced and covered with resignation; but toward the world she is unyielding and does not resign herself to its whims and wishes.

She is like a strong mountain tower on the border mountain, Lebanon, which looks toward the hostile and treacherous Damascus, and ever keeps watch over the enemy's country. She watches every approach that the enemy shall not take her unawares nor deceive her. She submits herself to her Lord, but to none other; she is erect, ready for battle, ready for the foe in whatever way he may come.

There is a precious and rare grace in the humility that is ever yielding and perfect toward God, but is combined with the bold fidelity that is relentless and unyielding toward the enemy. This humility and boldness make one appear, at times, like two different persons. Such a holy combination never goes out to fight in the flesh. Though humility before God is ever adorning her, before the world and in the sight of the enemy, there appears a bold, unflinching front; and there is a continuous warfare.

There is another meaning of the word, "nose." It means quick of scent, quick of discernment; able to discern not only good, but also evil. When the spiritual scent has been exercised through obedience and communion with the Lord, and through dwelling in His presence, to discern the odors of His oils and detect His fragrance afar off, we shall need no other training to prepare us to be quick of scent in discerning evil and the approach of the enemy.

Our spiritual scent is not trained, but destroyed, by going about and smelling all the evil odors of the flesh and the enemy; and evil odors appear like pure air to the one who smells them too continuously. When the dead flies of folly have caused an evil odor in our oils, and we live in the stench of the flesh until we are accustomed to it, all spiritual discernment is destroyed. If we would discern the enemy afar off, we must dwell in the holy atmosphere of our dear Lord, we must abide in close touch with our Beloved, we must ever smell His perfumes and breathe the pure atmosphere of His

presence. As we smell only His oils and perfumes and have them upon us, we shall discern the least approach of any odor other than His; and this will be a preparation for keen discernment.

The least sound of the flesh is like a harsh clatter upon our spiritual ears if we are dwelling in the stillness of His presence. If we have been seeking Him with our whole hearts, closing our ears to the world and to the flesh, we become still enough to hear His voice whenever He speaks; and we detect the voice of the enemy instantly because it is harsh and rasping. When we have His oils upon us, the approach of flesh or the enemy is like a vile odor within a sanctuary.

Child of God, have you been asking God to give you discernment? The first step that you must take, is to be able to discern yourself; for God cannot trust you to discern others until you can discern yourself. That which prepares you for all discernment, is to draw so near to God that you will see yourself first of all, then see everybody and everything from His viewpoint. You must dwell in His presence and smell His odors until you will instantly detect any strange odor that comes near your life. You must be in such submission to Him, that you will discern the least uprising within yourself, or any temptation thereto when it is afar off. You must become so quiet as to your own activities, that your life is like still waters; and any strange sound will alarm and arouse you to prayer and watching.

The face of the bride is turned toward her Lord, it is as a watchtower so that the enemy shall not surprise her; and it is from her Lord that she is warned of the approach of the enemy and the uprising of the flesh.

7:5 **"Thy head upon thee is like Carmel, and the hair of thy head like purple; the king is held captive in the tresses thereof."** We are not told that her head is like

Carmel, but that the head *upon her* is like Carmel. There are different precious meanings embraced in this verse, which are both encouraging and edifying.

Carmel was famous for its fertility and its fruitfulness; the name "Carmel" means "the mountain garden;" the mountain was crowned with evergreen trees, and was famous for its fields of corn. In Isa. 35:2, it is likened to a fertile and cultivated field. The head of the bride, or the crown upon her head, is represented by the fruitful Mount Carmel. In 1 Thess. 2:10, Paul calls the souls that have been brought to Christ through his ministry, his crown of glorying.

Many times we have such a small perspective and are so self-centered, that we fail to apprehend God's purpose in saving and choosing us. The majority of God's people will fail to have this precious crown of living souls, which is symbolized by the crown of golden corn that is upon Mount Carmel. They do not see that God would have them bring up to Him trees of righteousness, ever green, beautiful, and fragrant. As the evergreen trees and the golden grain crown Mount Carmel, so would God have His servants and people crowned with living souls whom they have led to Jesus, or guided unto a deeper knowledge of Him. The bride has not only the crown of living souls, but the crown of righteousness which is laid up for those who fight the good fight, who finish the course, who keep the faith; for those who love His appearing (2 Tim. 4:7, 8).

There is the crown of glory that fadeth not away, which is given to those who have oversight of the sheep and tend the flock of God; exercising oversight according to the will of God, and not for filthy lucre. This crown is given by the Chief Shepherd to those under-shepherds who are faithful, and who make themselves ensamples to the sheep (1 Pet. 5:4).

There is the crown of life, which is promised to those who endure temptation and who love Him (Jas. 1:12); and this

crown of life is promised by Christ to those who are faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10). Finally, the Spirit warns us in Rev. 3:11, to hold fast that which we have, that no man take our crown. If the bride of the Lamb faithfully runs the race that God has marked out for her; if she fights the good fight and wrestles victoriously with the powers of the enemy, she will be crowned with the incorruptible crown of the overcomer, which is set before her.

As we behold in vision the different crowns that are laid up for her if she goes through with the Lord, we can see her head like Mount Carmel crowned with living souls, crowned with life and glory, with fruitfulness even to an hundredfold. But the crown that embraces all we have mentioned, and into which these merge as the one glorious crown, is described in S. of Sol. 1:11. This is the royal crown, which the three Persons of the Godhead will make for her; the crown the wife of the Lamb shall wear as she sits and reigns with Christ upon His throne (see notes on ch. 1:11).

"And the hair of thy head like purple." There is another crown that the bride shall wear even as her Lord wore it, which is set forth in Heb. 2:9. "But we behold Him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor." "Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we *suffer* with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him" (Rom. 8:17).

It is given us to have fellowship with our precious Lord in His sufferings, and to know the power of His resurrection, and to become conformed to His death. Into all this must we enter if we would attain unto the out-resurrection from the dead. Purple is the color that always betokens the royal; it is composed of two colors, the scarlet and the blue (the suffering and the heavenly). It is as the bride partakes of the sufferings of Christ, and as she puts on His Heavenly

attributes, that these are merged into the royal, and she will reign with Him.

Twice has the King described her long, flowing hair, which is the emblem of her separation unto Him; but it is only *the King* who describes her hair by this figure. Only before the King, and toward Him alone does she wear this sign of subjection. The daughters of Jerusalem see the royal crown of the overcomer upon her; they see her crowned with His authority; they see her crowned with suffering as she counts not her life as dear unto herself, so that she may finish her course and accomplish that which God has marked out for her life.

One virgin of the bride who had been brought low because of his disloyalty to Christ, stood before the risen Lord, and we hear Christ say: "Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me?" We see the grief-marked face of this strong, but impulsive follower of the Lamb; and we hear him say: "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee." What comfort there is for a torn and bleeding heart that is stricken because of disloyalty to the Lord, to know that the eyes that are as flames of fire, are looking down into the depths of the heart, and can read that which could never be voiced.

Thus it was with Peter. Jesus saw his deep repentance; He knew that though Peter had failed through fear, he had really meant it when he said: "Lord, why cannot I follow Thee even now? I will lay down my life for Thee." And Jesus knowing this, took Peter at his word and granted unto him to lay down his life for his Lord and Master. "When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. Now this He spake, signifying by what manner of death he should glorify God."

As he was girded by another, and as he was carried out to die upon the cross as his Lord had died before him, truly, the hair of his head was purple with the crown of martyrdom, and with that heavenly preparation which would give to him the royal crown of his Beloved.

Another virgin of the bride wore this purple crown of hair as he knelt beneath the shower of stones which the enraged Jews cast at him; and as he looked up, he saw the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God. And Jesus Christ looking down upon this first martyr of the Cross, saw the crown of the martyr, He saw the purple hair of the bride.

It was just before Jesus Christ was crucified, that they put upon Him the robe of purple, which was an emblem of His Heavenly origin and character, and also the suffering which He was about to accomplish. Together, they made the purple, which was a sign of the Kingship of Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords.

It is because the bride's hair is long and even through separation unto her Lord, that the daughters of Jerusalem now see the royal locks upon her head. Only as Samson kept his locks from being shorn by the enemy, was his strength unimpaired. Only as the bride lives in holy separation unto her Lord, and thus her long hair is beheld by Him, can those about her see the sign of the overcomer, and of the bride who will sit with Christ upon His throne. The robe of suffering that Christ wore, was symbolized by the one the soldiers put upon Him during His trial; it is dyed with His own blood (Isa. 63:1-3).

To those who follow the Lord all the way and do not count the cost, He grants, in a small measure, to drink of the cup which He drank. It is upon those that drink of this cup of suffering, that the purple hair of martyrdom and royalty appears. Their head upon them is like Carmel, for

the Lord gives them souls for their hire; and it is through suffering, that souls are born into the Kingdom. None can proclaim the gospel so that there will be fruit that abides, unless they partake of the sufferings of Jesus Christ, and live this wonderful gospel themselves.

"The king is held in the tresses thereof." There was a time that the beautiful locks of separation, with which the head of the bride was adorned, were uneven and partly shorn through her indolence. But the fidelity and greater abandonment that followed this sad experience, have caused her hair to become longer and more beautiful than ever before through greater separation to her Beloved. And now her hair again is "as a flock of goats that lie along the side of Mount Gilead." As she has partaken with Him in His sufferings; as she has yielded to the chastening hand of God; and as she has been persecuted for Christ's sake, her silken locks of separation have also taken upon them the hue of death, the purple; which bespeaks both the royal and the suffering.

God brings to us, not only blessings and joy unspeakable and full of glory, but if we are to follow Christ up to His throne and reign with Him, we must also suffer with Him. How loath are we to suffer with Him; how we shrink back from entering into fellowship with Him in His sufferings, through which, alone, the locks of our separation shall take on that significant, yet gorgeous color, the purple.

The long, unshorn locks of separation are beautiful to our Heavenly Bridegroom; but when they begin to put on the purple of martyrdom, and of the overcomer, they hold the King captive. All the suffering through which Jesus Christ must pass, could not hold Him back from coming and offering Himself for a sin-cursed world. Though He knew that His Father's face would be turned from Him, though He knew that He must become that loathsome thing, "Sin," in order to bring the righteousness of God to those who should

believe upon His Name, He was not hindered from doing God's will.

None of these things held Him back from emptying Himself and taking the form of a servant; from being made in the likeness of man, and becoming obedient to death, even the death of the cross. None of these things could hold Him back from accomplishing this death, through which He brought to naught him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and delivered all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Though He must lay aside His glory which He had with the Father from the beginning, and must cross over the mountains of separation (Bether); this could not hold Him back. He resisted not the hatred of evil men, though in the place of twelve disciples, He could have called for twelve legions of angels to deliver Him from their hands. He could have come down from the cross, and left us in our sins. He could have smitten with the breath of His nostrils those who surrounded the cross and scoffed at Him as He hung there and died; but He was obedient to the cross and steadfastly set His face to finish that which His Father had given Him to do.

When death at last laid its hand upon Him, and the grave received His body, neither death nor the grave, neither Satan nor Hell, could hold Him; He was victorious over all things and over all who would have held Him in the tomb. How gladly would the Jews have held Him in the tomb; with what precaution did they provide that the tomb should be guarded. It seems incredible and puerile that men who had known of God's mighty works for centuries, should believe that the One who had spoken the earth into existence, could be held in the tomb by a large stone taken from the earth which He had made.

The Jews' hearts were hardened and they were stiff-necked, but they had a dread and insistent premonition that

this despised Man might prove to be the Messiah for whom their nation had been looking. But they had gone so far away from God, that even when the body disappeared in that mysterious way, and the guards came and told them how they quaked and became as dead men through fear of the angel of the Lord who rolled away the stone, the Jews gave much money unto the soldiers to say that His disciples had come by night and stolen Him away.

None of these things could hold back Jesus Christ, nor deter Him from coming to do His Father's will, and thus bring redemption to you and me through so great suffering and so great a sacrifice. But when Abraham interceded for Sodom and Gomorrah, Jehovah lingered and listened to him; until from asking that the cities might be saved if there were fifty righteous there, he asked that for the sake of ten righteous, Jehovah would spare the cities of the plain. When Jacob wrestled with the Angel of the Lord, he, in his weakness, held Him until daybreak, and until He had blessed him.

It is through devotion and partaking in His sufferings, that the bride of the Lamb binds, as with thongs, her purple locks about her Beloved and holds Him a captive at her side. With us, as with the disciples on their way to Emmaus, He often makes as though He would go further; but if we cling to His garments by prayer, if we hold Him with the clasp of our obedience and devotion, we can constrain Him to abide with us. If our separation to Him and obedience to His commands become more perfect, if we seek Him with greater determination and zeal, rejoicing in all the sufferings that we undergo for His sake, He is held a willing captive by our weak love, and trembling hands.

As the bride has been searching for Him, He appears to have been absent; but He has marked her search through the streets of the city; He has seen the rebuff and blows of those who claimed to be His watchmen. He has seen her

tender feet bleeding from the roughness of the way, and stained with the mire which has been thrown upon them by those who resent the disturbance that her outcries have made.

Bride of the Lamb, do not repine when those who should understand your love for your Beloved, smite and persecute you; the Lord beholds it all, and He hears all that is said. Do not grieve if your name is cast out as evil, and you are smitten and defamed by those who should tenderly care for you and bind up your wounds. Jesus knows it all; and if you turn to Him, He will pour in oil that will heal every wound and ease every pain. Do not grieve if your separation to your dear Lord is called fanaticism, and you are branded as insincere and narrow; He knows it all. It was He who marked out the path for your feet, and who first journeyed over it to the cross. It was He who said that the gate is narrow and the way straitened that leadeth to life; it was He who said that many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able.

As you press on, counting all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus your Lord; as you bear about in your body the dying of the Lord, and His life becomes manifested through partaking in His death, your hair will take on the purple of suffering and of the overcomer, and the King will be held captive by one tress of your purple hair.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE BRIDE FAIR AND FRUITFUL. *7:6, 7.*

7:6. **"How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!"** The bride addressed almost the same words to the Bridegroom in the first chapter of the book (ch. 1:16), that the daughters of Jerusalem have just spoken to the bride in this sixth verse. As the daughters of Jerusalem behold her love and devotion to her Beloved, they are drawn nearer and nearer to Him. They have wondered at the love of Christ that constrains her, and is seen in every look and act, as well as heard in every word. We little realize the charm and drawing power that lie in humble abandonment to Jesus Christ. Holy devotion and abandonment should permeate our lives, filling and controlling the inner man, which appears only before the eyes of God; clothing and adorning the life and every member of the outer man, which is seen by those about us.

Too often, those who are watching Christians to see if there is a reality in their boasted love and consecration to the Lord, are disappointed and hindered, if not driven away altogether, by the inconsistencies and the discrepancies that they see between their words and their lives. Only God knows the hearts of those about us; more often than we are aware, the unsaved who live with us fail to see in the life, the manifestation of that which we profess and claim. Better would it be if our profession were a little short of our experience, than to have it so far above the place to which we have attained, that the name of our Lord is dishonored. As some

one has said of the inconsistent life, the actions speak so loud that the words cannot be heard.

Many times the first blade that appears from the conviction that the Holy Spirit has planted in the heart, the first indication of the sinner drawing closer to the mercy seat, is a love for those who really love the Lord, and who are living and walking close to Him. As God deals with sinners, and they draw near to the Lord, they must, perforce, draw near to those who are walking close to Him; and they begin to see the beauty in the bride of the Lamb.

They begin to see the beauty in her long locks of separation, and the charm and glory in the purple of suffering. They begin to see the power that is in faith and love, and they wonder at her calm, deep eyes, which speak of mysterious, secret converse with One who has gone to the Paradise of God. They begin to see the courage that is as impregnable as a border fortress; and her fearlessness in the face of man and devil. They fear before that strange insight that reveals to her their condition, and the discernment that uncovers those things that they thought were hidden away. But their love goes out to her, and also a reverence that comes from the Lord's presence with her.

Even those who know not the Lord, if they are not open enemies of His, will be drawn to the humble, consistent child of God who is wholly given over to Him. Even sinners know how she ought to live; they will love her, and admire her pure, holy life. The sinner often sees the shortage in the lives of God's children, more clearly than is suspected by those who are being scrutinized.

How fair, how beautiful, even to those who know not the Lord, is His devoted bride. Beautiful with the reflection of His beauty, which is shining upon her because she is abiding in His presence and beholding His glory. Those who have passed through the experiences thus far portrayed

in the Song of Solomon, are abiding in the presence of the Lord and are walking in such increasing light, that it brings awe to those who are looking on.

As every veil and cobweb is swept away by taking up the cross and dying daily, the soul enters into the presence of the Lord with unveiled face. One reason we do not appear fair in the eyes of those who are watching us to see what our Christ is like, is because there are so many veils of self-life over our faces. In the place of following hard after the Lord and seeking His face evermore, we have taken our rest. Too many cobwebs of indolence and carelessness have been spun over our hearts and faces, which have kept the dew of God's presence, and the light of the Sun of righteousness from falling upon us, and reflecting from us to the glory of God. But as we abide in His presence with unveiled faces, His glory fastens itself upon us and increases.

As we watch closely, keeping everything, even the smallest thing, from between our Lord and us, as we set our faces toward the light, and constantly behold the glory of our dear Lord, we are transfigured into the same image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord. This is not imagination as some would have us think; it is more real than the features upon which this change appears. An unearthly, solemn light seems to radiate from the face of that one who is following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.

Who of us has not been silenced and filled with awe and reverence, as we have beheld the glory of the Lord upon the one who has reached the last stage of the journey, and has partaken of the image of Christ through continually beholding Him with unveiled face? This divine light and glory never pierces even the thinnest veil, it does not stamp its reflection upon the face that is covered by the faintest cobweb. Therefore, let us press on into the presence of the Lord, that those who know not our Beloved may see His beauty upon us, and be drawn to Him through us.

Child of God, dost thou remember how fair thy Saviour appeared to thee when first thou didst meet Him? Rememberest thou how beautiful was His face when it first shined upon thee in all thy blackness and shame, in all thy distress and undone condition? When He washed thee in His precious blood and spoke peace to thy soul, when he brought thee to that precious table of communion, dost thou remember how beautiful His face was as He looked at thee, and called thee His dove? Hast thou forgotten that first intimate communion with Him, when His light commenced to shine upon thee with brighter and clearer rays? Hast thou forgotten the rest that He brought to thy troubled heart in the midst of turmoil and distress, and how thy heart cried with fervent love: "Behold, thou art fair, my Beloved, yea, pleasant"?

Then remember, that if thou dost follow after Him and cling to Him, if thou dost walk in His footsteps, the day will come when thou wilt so perfectly partake of His image and beauty, that those about thee will say: "How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!" Even to those who are not yet the bride, there will be such rest and refreshment, such imparting of comfort and peace in thy presence, that they will know that thou hast been with thy Lord and hast learned of Him.

7:7. **"This thy stature is like to a palm tree, and thy breasts to its cluster."** As in the description of Christ, it seems there are not enough figures in nature to perfectly describe the beauty of the bride, whom Christ has redeemed and is leading up to Glory. We see in this description, and also in those that the Bridegroom gives of the bride, that every symbolism of beauty, humility, holy boldness, and fruitfulness, together with all the attributes with which she is adorned, is brought forth by the Holy Spirit; and no single symbol can fully set forth her appearance before her Lord, and before the eyes of those who behold her.

Every feature and every member is complete, and the preceding description is the portrayal of the bride as one. But each member of the bride must be perfected, and through yielding to the working of the Holy Spirit, all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

First, her growth and strength are described; then, the fruit of her faith and love. When the Bridegroom describes the breasts of the bride, which are "faith" and "love," He describes them as they appear to Him, as two fawns that are twins of a roe. Before the daughters of Jerusalem draw near to the Lord and become a part of the bride, they describe them by the same figure.

Here, the daughters of Jerusalem begin to draw near to God and to inquire for the Lord. Their hearts long to be one with this glorious bride. The figures taken to describe the breasts of the bride are very different, and to the natural understanding would seem to have no connection; but they are really a different outlook of the same thing. The first description, given by the Bridegroom and the daughters of Jerusalem (ch. 4:5; 7:3), set forth the operation of faith and love within her, which must work before she can go on unto all the fullness of God, and possess that which He has for her. The last description given (ch. 7:7, 8), pictures the result of this inward working.

Through faith and love, she has first partaken of the promises, and can hold out to others the wonderful promises of God. She can also show the precious fruit that will come to those who will climb up into her branches, and, with her, bring forth fruit to the glory of God. It is the fruit of the Word and of the promises of God that is here described. It is through faith and love that the Word of God has been manifested, and the virgins of the bride have be-

come living epistles seen and read of all men. The abundant fruit that has been brought forth in their lives, is symbolized by the clusters of fruit that crown the palm tree. The Word of God has become flesh in them; the promises of God have been claimed through their faith and love and have brought forth fruit that abides.

It is nearly always through the instrumentality of some child of God that sinners are brought to the Lord. As babes, they seek counsel from those whom God has used with them; they go to them for help in prayer, and for encouragement. This is beautifully symbolized by their desire to climb up into the branches of the palm tree, and to partake of the fruit with which it is ladened.

There are many meanings connected with the palm tree, all of which wondrously set forth the attainments and beauty, the fruitfulness and strength of the bride. The palm tree always grows beside springs of clear, living water. The weary traveler in the desert is encouraged to press on, as he sees in the distance groves of stately palm trees; even one palm tree gives him courage, for it is a sure sign of water. Thus it is with the Christians in this world. Where Christians are found who are walking close to the Lord, whether it is in companies, or by ones and twos, it is a sure evidence that the pure water of life will be found there also.

These palm trees of God, these trees of righteousness, give the water of life to every sin-sick soul that comes to them for help, by pointing to the eternal Spring whence they draw their own refreshment and life. The refreshing springs are not in the palm trees, but the trees are nourished from the springs; neither does the Fountain of living water have its source in the Christian, but the Christian draws refreshment from the great Fountain. As the palm tree beckons to the traveler in the desert, and ever points to the springs at its roots, so the Christian is a channel through which living

streams, which have their source in the throne of God, flow out to those that are thirsty.

The weary children of God who are weak and worn, who are borne down by many cares and by the heat of the day: those that have not gone far in the Christian journey, may hasten to that grove of strong living trees, and may be refreshed and encouraged to press on. Their prayers are reenforced by the intercession of those who have gone along the path, those that have grown strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. They can lean upon those whose faith has been strengthened by many testings; those whose love never fails to encourage the faltering soul to press on toward the goal, and unto the recompense of the reward.

There is not only water where the palm tree is found, but there is shade from the heat of the sun. The roots of the palm tree send out shoots that spread abroad near the ground and make grateful shade for the weary traveler, and thus shall the righteous flourish like the palm tree (Ps. 92:12). The weary, tired soul finds rest and a quieting power with those who have entered into the rest of God, and whose lives are fed from the hidden springs that come from the throne of God. The rest of God, which is manifested in their lives, flows out to those in need; and the young and the weak are led to the Fountain where they, too, are refreshed and find life more abundant.

The palm tree never grows earthward but heavenward. No pressure nor weight, however great or heavy, that is laid upon the palm tree, can bear it down or hold it near the earth. It will not be bound down, neither will it grow crooked; but in spite of all opposition, it keeps its face looking upward, and pursues its heavenward course.

This characteristic of the palm tree brings deep conviction to our hearts as we remember how the weights of testings and tribulation have many times borne us down. How we

have grown earthward because of the attraction of the world and the love of the things of the world. How many times we have bowed down beneath the testings and temptations the enemy has sent against us. We blush as we recall how the world, the enemy, and even our friends and family have fastened weights upon us, so that in the place of growing straight upward toward our Lord, we have bent and bowed and have become crooked or deformed in some way or place.

But it shall not be thus with the bride of the Lamb. No weight of earth, however heavy, shall be able to hold her down. Though the weight of influence and of earthly love should cling to those that will make up the bride of Christ; though the fear of man and the desire to please man should strive to impede their way, none of these weights shall be able to hold down those who have set their faces steadfastly to go through with the Lord, and to become overcomers to the glory of His Name. Though all hell should strive to turn these palm trees of God downward, it shall not avail; though every foe and every earthly friend should conspire together, it shall but make the bride of Christ keep her face more constantly and prayerfully looking upward. As she looks away from all else to Jesus, she grows heavenward! heavenward!

The palm tree is one of the most stately of all trees. It does not lose its leaves and beauty as do other plants and trees, but it is always green and flourishing. It is an emblem of constancy and patience, of fruitfulness and victory. The more it is oppressed, the more it grows; and the more it grows, the stronger and higher it is in the top. It does not spread out its leaves and bear its fruit near the earth, but it is in its highest branches that it spreads out and becomes strong. It is remarkable for its long life and continued fruitfulness.

Thus it is with the bride. She is like a tree planted by hidden fountains of water, from which she is ever drinking, and whence she draws her life. She brings forth her fruit

in her season, her leaf never withers, and the Lord prospers the work of her hands. When heat comes, she puts her trust in God and her roots spread out wider and become stronger, as she draws cool refreshment from Him who is her source of supply. Though the rain ceases, and there is such dryness as withers all those who do not put their trust in the Lord, the bride finds food and water. Her branches continue to reach out, her leaves remain green and beautiful, her fruit is luscious and increases continually.

She counts it all joy when she falls into manifold (or "variegated") temptations, for she is not looking at the things that are seen, but she has her eyes fixed upon the Captain of her Salvation, and upon the things that are not seen. The more the bride is oppressed, the higher she grows by the hidden streams. She does not send out her large, fruitful branches near the earth, so that all who pass by can pluck them off and devastate her beauty; but she mounts up toward Heaven, and as she abides in the pure air of the presence of God, she sends out strong branches that bear much fruit.

Those that pass by cannot partake of her fruit, neither can they find support in her branches that have grown high and spread out Heavenward, without climbing up toward Heaven. None can pluck the fruit with which she is loaded, until they have left the earthly atmosphere and gone up into the top of her branches. Through oppression, she has grown higher and stronger and has spread her branches out to a greater distance; for it is the highest branches that spread out and turn their leaves and fruit upward.

The long life of the palm tree symbolizes the eternal life, which believers have in Christ Jesus. God hath given unto us eternal life, and that life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath the life.

Some of the expositors see in the fruit that is mentioned, the fruit of the grapevine that has been trained to grow and

cling to the tree. No doubt this is true in the verse a little further down, where we see that the grape-vine has been trained upon the tree. But here it speaks of the clusters of the tree. In the 8th verse, it speaks of the clusters of the vine, and there is every reason to believe that while they are symbols of the same heavenly food, the thought is expressed differently. The symbolisms in this book are so diverse, that the Spirit seems to draw figures and language from every source to describe the beauties of Christ and His bride, and to portray their love and mutual relation.

Different trees from the Palm tree family, bear fruit; especially "The date tree which is of beautiful aspect, of delightful taste and fit for both food and drink." (Cruden.) The Church of Jesus Christ, not the visible Church, but "the General Assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in Heaven," is like the palm tree in its stature and stately strength. It is also like the fruitful palm tree, upon which are found luscious clusters of fruit that have been brought forth because of those hidden springs at its roots. Only as the bride draws from Him who is "The fountain of living waters" can she become strong and bear fruit as the palm tree.

CHAPTER XL

THE BRIDE BRINGS SUSTENANCE AND LIVING WATER TO THOSE ABOUT HER. 7:8, 9.

7:8. **"I said, I will climb up into the palm tree, I will take hold of the branches thereof."** Those who have been watching the bride, are drawn toward Him who has done such great things in her life; and they long to partake of the fruit which they see upon her. As she holds out to them the hope of salvation, and the precious promises of God, they see the fruit of these promises in her life and know that she has proven them to be true. They begin to realize that this salvation and these heavenly blessings are for them also, and that "Whosoever will, may come and drink of the water of life freely."

They begin to see that whatever God has done for any one of His children, He is willing to do for all who come and pay the price; and that their lives need no longer be like a desert without water, like broken cisterns in which no moisture is found. They begin to apprehend that they need not be barren and fruitless, with no power nor beauty. God has no favorites, He is no respecter of persons; but in every nation, he that feareth Him, and he that would partake of the fruits of righteousness is acceptable to Him.

The beauty and fruitfulness of those who are living near to the Lord, always attract the earnest soul. It is through beholding these tokens of life and the favor of God, that others are drawn to Jesus Christ, and are led into a place of like privilege and joy through the instruction and help of those who know God. It is not the complaining Christian

that brings many souls to Christ. It is not the Christian whose life is inconsistent that attracts those who know not the Lord. It is not the Christian whose leaf is small and withered, whose branches are weak and few, whose life is barren and almost fruitless, that draws others to desire their experience.

The Christian who draws others to Christ, is he who stands for the Truth and lives it in such obedience and fidelity, that his life is ever moving and growing upward; and his branches are becoming stronger with every hard thing he encounters. The fruit and manifestation of the fulfillment of the promises of God, are appearing and crowning him more and more, and attract those who would seek the Lord. Such a manifested experience creates hunger in others for a like experience.

Those who would approach the Lord and taste of His wonderful salvation, do not go for help to the Christians who are mingling with the world; they do not go to those who are weak and wavering, who are fervent to God one day, and indifferently moving along with the world the next day. They would never be drawn to lean upon the strength of such Christians, for they see that there is no strength in them upon which they can lean. There is no evidence of the joy and fruit that would prove they have partaken and entered into that which they profess.

Many souls have been turned aside by the weak, inconsistent lives of those who name the Name of Christ. Many have fallen into despair and have turned back from seeking salvation because they have seen the failures and the helplessness of those who claim to be following the Lord. Many have given up seeking God, fearing they could not hold out nor live victoriously, because they have watched the lack of victory in the lives of those—perhaps in their own family—who called themselves Christians. They have seen that, in

the place of steadfastness, there was instability; in the place of a worthy, consistent life, there were unworthy actions and words; in the place of victory, there were defeat and barrenness; and they were not encouraged to seek the Lord and be saved.

But when a hungry soul is brought in contact with those who are strong in the Lord; those whose lives have pierced into the presence of God; those who are abiding and flourishing in the sunlight of His approval, their hunger is increased. When they see a life crowned with strong branches and clusters of luscious fruit, they are encouraged to lay hold of the help that is in these strong branches; and climb upward until they, too, can partake of the fruit with which this tree is ladened.

They cannot climb up unaided, but they draw support and encouragement from those who have gone over the path. When any difficulty presents itself, they receive encouragement from those who have surmounted all difficulties, from those who have made every hard thing a stepping-stone to ascend into higher heights and greater light.

It is the strong that must bear the burdens and infirmities of the weak. It is the strong that must encourage the faint-hearted, exhorting them and reassuring them; praying with them and for them; until from being weak-hearted they become strong-hearted. It is they who have become palm trees in the Vineyard of the Lord, that must support the weak, holding up the faltering steps, establishing the unstable, fitful walk. It is the palm tree Christian who is longsuffering toward the weak and fearful.

"Let thy breasts be as clusters of the vine, and the smell of thy breath like apples." Those, whom God is using, first give the spiritual food that is symbolized by "the clusters" of the palm tree, to those who are inquiring the way of Salvation, and seeking a knowledge of God. Then they give

them the cluster of the vine, which is the New Wine of the Kingdom, that they may have life and have it more abundantly. All of this is imparted through faith working by love in those who are dressers of the Vineyard of the Lord. It is through the love that goes out to the soul for whom Christ has died, and the faith that holds on to God until the soul is born into the Kingdom, that the food is given, and the clusters of the True Vine are imparted.

It is not at all inconsistent that the bride of Christ should be spoken of almost as though she were the source of the food and drink which belong to the Kingdom of Christ. She is not the source, but she is the channel; she is the body of Him who is the source of life and of all spiritual food and drink, even Christ. She is His body; and it is through the members of His body that is now on earth, that He is working and doing greater things than He did through the human body in which He walked the earth during those thirty odd years.

"Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn over her; that ye may suck and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory." (Isa. 66:10 ff.) When it is possible, God always uses man as an instrument to bring sinners to Christ, and, after they are saved, to nourish and instruct them until they, in turn, are able to be used by Him.

It is not that God's instruments have nourishment and life in themselves, in the sense of being the fountain from which life and nourishment come; but they are channels which are vitally connected with Him who is the source of life, of nourishment, of all refreshment, power and growth. And it has pleased God to use these living channels, through which to point out the water of life to all who are willing to come and drink.

Until the babe in Christ is able to draw direct from Christ in all things, God has provided teachers who, in the power of the Holy Spirit, tend His vineyard; those who are under Him and bring spiritual food to the hungry, and living water to the thirsty. These tenders have become strong through partaking of the heavenly food, and of the Word of God; and they can nourish those who are weak, by bringing them heavenly food. Those tenders who have drawn life and strength from the True Vine, who have abode in Christ and drawn more abundant life from Him, have brought forth much fruit. They can teach the tender sprouts that have just been grafted in, how to abide in Christ, so that they too may bear much fruit.

There is no image so exalted in the Word of God, as the vine and its fruit. In the Old Testament, God uses it as a figure of His Ancient People, and in more than one place, He speaks of them as a vine. (Ps. 80:8; Isa. 5:1; etc.) In the New Testament, Christ calls Himself the True Vine, and speaks of all those who are in Him, as the branches. He tells His followers how they can bear fruit, and solemnly warns them that without Him they can do nothing.

At the communion table, the wine is an emblem of His blood, and it is a symbol of the New Wine of the Kingdom. It is the New Wine of the Kingdom that gives life, exhilarating the spirit of the weary one and encouraging the disheartened. We see that the breasts of the bride are not compared to the clusters of *a vine*, but to the clusters of *the vine*. No other vine can bear anything but wild grapes, excepting Him who is the True Vine; and only as the branches are grafted into Him can they receive strength from His life flowing through them, and bring forth abundance of fruit.

As the hand of the Husbandman cleanses and prunes the branches, they not only bear fruit, but they bear more fruit.

As the branches go on from strength to strength and from knowledge to knowledge, they learn to abide in Him who is the True Vine. They go from the "more fruit," to the "much fruit," until the fruit in the life of the bride is like the clusters of the vine, bringing cheer to those who are only beginning to partake of these experiences, and encouraging them to yield to the hand of the Husbandman that they, too, may bear much fruit.

As they yield and their faith goes out to God; as, through faith, they abide in Christ, little by little they appropriate that which Christ has bought for them, and the fruit of the Christ-life, and of the promises of God which they have claimed and received, begin to appear upon them.

"And the smell of thy breath like apples." In the second chapter, the bride likens her Beloved to the apple tree among the trees of the forest (see notes on ch. 2:3). The more the bride feeds upon Christ, the more the fragrance of the Christ-life breathes out from her life, and the more the odor of Him upon whom she is feeding, is discerned.

In the natural, the breath bears the odor of that which has been eaten. It is the same in the spiritual; if the bride is feeding continually upon the fruit of this one incomparable Apple Tree, the air about her will give forth the fragrance of this Divine Apple. Everything that goes out from her life will exhale the odors of Christ dwelling in her heart by faith. As she learns to know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge, she is filled unto all the fullness of God.

In that company of obedient, spiritual Christians who are following hard after their Lord, there is a breathing out of the life of Christ, which can be discerned by all who come into their presence. The working of self and its activities are gone; there is rest, sweet rest, as such a company come together; as they sit together with each other and with their Lord in heavenly places. It is the rest that they have re-

ceived from Him who alone can give rest. As they took His yoke upon them and learned of Him; as they became meek and lowly in heart, they found rest unto their souls.

If even two come together who are in this relation to Him that is described above, Christ meets them. When they agree as concerning anything, the Father does it because of the One in whose Name they ask it; and because the breath, upon which their petitions are wafted upward, smells of the one Apple Tree. Not only does Christ meet two or three who come to Him in this way, but He meets even one who approaches Him, and upon whose breath is the divine odor. As we ask "In the Name of Jesus," as His ointment is poured upon every prayer, and the breath gives out the odors of the one fruitful Tree, our prayers go through to God and bring down answers to the glory of His Name.

God would not have our breath ladened with the vile odors of unbelief. He would not have any scent go out from us that does not come from Him who is the source of all fragrance; who is the storehouse of all nourishment and food for the soul; who is the fountain of all fountains and of all spiritual drink. But we should so draw from the living waters and look up, that our stature would be like the tall, beautiful palm, whose leaves are ever green, whose branches are strong and stalwart, whose fruit hangs in abundant clusters.

We would not be barren and fruitless, so that the great Husbandman must take us away as a branch, so that we would be withered and finally be cast into the fire. But we would abide in Him more continuously through faith in our union with Him, until we not only bear more fruit, but until we bear much fruit. We would let our faith and love go out to Him until every promise of God finds fulfillment in our lives, and an hundredfold fruitage appears to the glory of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

7:9. **"And thy mouth like the best wine, that goeth down smoothly for my Beloved, gliding through the lips of those that are asleep."** Thus far the daughters of Jerusalem have been speaking of the bride, describing her beauty and attainments, and her attraction to the Bridegroom; and, because of all this, her attraction to them. They have gone from the place in which we found them at the beginning of the book (namely, that of curiosity and almost criticism), through several experiences which always proved to be a step nearer to the Lord, until they inquire where her Beloved has gone and express a desire that they may seek Him with her.

As she drew nearer to the Lord, they saw her caught away among the chariots of her Prince; they besought her to return, and described her as she appeared to them in her separation and beauty. As she entered into deeper knowledge of her Beloved, as she is brought under the control of the Holy Spirit, they discern her beauty, and their hunger for the Lord is aroused. Thus we see how a soul is drawn Godward through the beauty of those who are following hard after the Lord.

In the eighth verse, they have determined to partake of the salvation which has been provided for them; and now we see that they have already taken this step, for they no longer speak of the Bridegroom as *her* Beloved, but as *their* Beloved. In the first verse of the seventh chapter, they describe the beauty of the feet of her who brings the gospel to the lost and dying. Here, they rejoice in the words of wisdom and life that proceed from her mouth, as she brings to others the glad tidings of the redemption which all may have in Jesus Christ. They have seen her giving forth the gospel and bringing to others the New Wine of the Kingdom; and they have heard her cry: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money;

come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Isa. 55:1). "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take of the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17).

The word "smoothly" means wine that has worked itself out; and the mouth, or speech, of the bride of Jesus Christ is like the very best wine, the wine from which all fermentation is gone, so that there is no more working and fermenting in it. Her own words have been put away. Her tongue has been purified, and her speech is like the very best wine, the New Wine of the Kingdom. She has entered into that place where God has taken hold of her words, where her voice is kept for Him, and her speech is with grace seasoned with salt.

To the one who is following hard after the Lord, it is truly out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaketh. She does not always go out with the set purpose of speaking to others of the Lord, and of winning them for Christ; but her thoughts and heart are so full of her Beloved, that she can think of none other, and finds no joy in speaking of worldly or indifferent things.

What does it not mean to have your speech so purified, that your own words are all put away? to have your words so taken hold of by God, that it is the Spirit that speaks through you even in the common things? Oh, if all our words were to the glory of Jesus Christ, we should have a mouth like the best wine! How much there is in the Word of God about our words and speech; from Genesis to Revelation, admonition is heaped upon admonition. Is our "speech always with grace seasoned with salt" (Col. 4:6)? Are we so wise that our mouth is "like a fountain of life" (Prov. 10:11)? Is our speech always that of the wise man, which, we are told, is "as a flowing brook"? Too often,

alas, is the speech of Christians like a flowing brook, only it is like a stream of muddy turbulent water. But the speech of the wise shall continually flow with the pure, clear water of life (Prov. 18:4).

Think, for one moment, what it would mean for the glory of God, if our words were like a running brook of living water, fed by hidden springs, pure and sparkling. Words that are like such streams, water every place and give life to everything they touch, as they flow over God's Garden. This is the thought which is brought out here; and only as we are in the place where God can take control of our words, can we know what God can do with the sanctified mouth. He will put such heavenly thoughts and revelations in our hearts, He will fill them with His own food and with living water, and our mouths will overflow out of the abundance of our hearts.

There is another precious thought in here, that brings conviction to us if it is not true, and brings great blessing when we have entered in even a little. It is this: all our words must be for Him alone. As the mouth of a pure woman is for her husband or betrothed alone, so the mouth of the bride of Christ is for Him alone. Have you apprehended that God can bring us to the place where every word, even the commonplace that appears to have no connection with the Heavenly, can be for our Beloved alone?

How many times, when God is dealing with us to bring us to this blessed place, the Spirit warns us when we begin saying something that is not for our Beloved alone. If we obey these gentle checks of the Spirit, no matter how peculiar it appears to those around us, we shall find that God will more and more take control of our words. In the place of the idle, unworthy words, will come words of exhortation, of truth; words of instruction and encouragement; words that will point sinners to the Lamb of God who has taken away the sin of the world.

In the third chapter of James, we are told: "If any stumbleth not in word, the same is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also." A little later, we read that the tongue is a little member, but it boasteth great things, kindling great forest fires; it is the world of iniquity among our members, setting on fire the wheel of nature, and is set on fire of hell. This is a description of the tongue of the sinner, and, sad to say, many of those who call themselves by the Name of Christ, bear marks of this same working. Words that are spoken in the right place and at the right time, are like apples of gold in network of silver.

"The lips of the righteous knoweth what is acceptable," and "the heart of the righteous studieth to answer." He is always ready to give an answer to every man that asketh him a reason concerning the hope that is in him, yet with meekness and fear. It is true with those who have entered into the knowledge of God and of His Christ, and have the experimental knowledge that must accompany salvation, that: "The wise in heart shall be called prudent; and the sweetness of his lips increaseth learning. Understanding is a wellspring of life unto him that hath it. . . . The heart of the wise instructeth his mouth and addeth learning to his lips, pleasant words are as honeycomb, sweet to the soul and health to the bones" (Prov. 16:21-24).

Such words go down smoothly; there is nothing of the flesh, nothing in the life or in the words spoken at other times, to cause those who hear to stumble; but they go down smoothly. There is no sin nor impurity in such words, nothing that would correspond to leaven and to that which causes the wine to work. But it is speaking forth the words and truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ; letting the hidden springs flow out in streams of salvation to those who are thirsty; it is a testimony to those who are sleeping the sleep of death, who are dead in trespasses and sins. It is patient, gentle

admonition and encouragement to those who hear; it goes down smoothly. Such words do not irritate and burn, they do not choke and distress; but like costly wine, they go down smoothly.

Oh, what cannot a mouth do that is kept for God alone, used for Him, and by Him only. How solemn is the thought, that when our words have gone out of our mouths, we can never get them back. With whatever of good or evil they are freighted, they have gone over into Eternity, and their influence goes on and on. Even after we have passed away, the effect of much we have spoken abides, whether for good or for evil.

Have we spoken hastily? has there been a latent desire to wound others, to stab them (though not openly) with the words we have spoken to them? Those words ceased to be ours as soon as they passed our lips; and though we may repent and ask forgiveness, though we may be forgiven, the words have gone into eternity. They have wounded others and perhaps caused them to stumble; they have grieved the Holy Spirit; they have weakened or destroyed the confidence some one may have had in us as followers of Jesus Christ; they have broken our communion with God and hindered our own spiritual life.

Are they foolish words we have spoken? They too are past recall. Some one that thought we were dwelling in the presence of God and in communion with Jesus Christ, has been shocked at some trifling frivolity that might not seem sinful in itself, but was unworthy the wife of the Lamb of God.

We are so quick to let our words go forth, to tell all we know, and more that we surmise; to express our opinions, and speak about others as though *we* were not compassed with infirmities. We are so ready to criticize and set every one right about small unimportant things, as though

we were the people, and wisdom would die with us (Job 12:2).

What anguish some of us have had as God made us see the solemnity of our words and actions! How many times, through hastiness and lack of wisdom, or through the working of our flesh, have we been rash with our mouths! How many of God's children color the truth enough to wound another; and those words may be forgiven, but when once heard, the scar and pain remain. And many of God's little ones are hindered because of the words or actions of those whom they have looked upon as ensamples. Truly, "In the multitude of words there wanteth not transgression; he that refraineth his lips doeth wisely" (Prov. 10:19).

Let us be humbled when we have transgressed along this line, and hide away in our hearts the words in Eccl. 10:12-14. "The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself. The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness; and the end of his talk is mischievous madness. A fool also multiplieth words."

When we speak ungracious words, whether to any one or about any one, we take our place among the fools. When we let our tongues speak unworthily, our reputation and influence are swallowed up by our lips. When we let our words pour out beyond our control, they begin with foolishness, but before we finish, they end up in mischievous madness. God tells us in His Word: "He that spareth his words hath knowledge; and he that is of a cool spirit is a man of understanding. Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise; when he shutteth his lips, he is esteemed as prudent" (Prov. 17:27, 28).

The word, "asleep," means "slack, languid, dying or dead." It not only applies to the unsaved, but to the Christians who are not living close to the Lord. When the words that come out of the mouth of the bride of the Lamb, are

like wine, they give life to those who are dead, and arouse those who are not living as they ought. As the New Wine of the Kingdom is brought to them by those who are chosen of God to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation, their lips are caused to speak.

The daughters of Jerusalem know the power there is in this New Wine of the Kingdom, for they have freely partaken of it and have joined the ranks of those who call the Lord their Beloved. Only this wine can bring to life those who are spiritually dead, and make those speak who are asleep in sin. Even when the bride is proclaiming the glad tidings of the gospel, her supreme purpose is not to send forth these words for others only, but it is for the glory of her Beloved. She remembers that the vineyard is His and that the work is His, and it is for Him that she gives forth the words of life. It is only when a soul is lifted from the miry clay, and has had a new song put in his mouth, that he can speak words of Truth and Life, words that will glorify God and feed other souls.

CHAPTER XLI

THE BRIDE HAS ABUNDANCE OF FRESH AND PRESERVED FRUIT FOR THE BRIDEGROOM. 7:10-13.

7:10. **"I am my Beloved's; and His desire is toward me."** The daughters of Jerusalem and the bride are now speaking, and we see that they have become one. It is, indeed, a new song that has been put in the mouths of the daughters of Jerusalem. No tongue can describe the joy and rejoicing that fills the soul that has really come to the Lord and tasted of this uttermost salvation; into whose heart and life the Lord has come and taken full possession, taking up His abode there that He may work out His will in the life.

There was a time when we did not want the Lord, when He had no beauty that we should desire Him, and we could see no form nor comeliness in Him. As soon as we really accept Jesus Christ as our Saviour, our hearts rejoice that: "My Beloved is mine, and I am His" (ch. 2:16); our first joy is in the consciousness that He is ours. There is such satisfaction in knowing that He is ours in as real a way as though there were none else to claim Him and His love; although we know and rejoice that He is the Lord and Saviour of all other believers. And we not only rejoice that He is ours, but we rejoice that we belong to Him. We rest down in the satisfaction of claiming Him for our own, and we draw on His protection and working in our behalf.

This is our first joy; and the joy of belonging to Him comes as the next precious thought. As we go on with the Lord, the relation between us grows more intimate; our love

is drawn out because of Himself rather than because of what He does for us, and because of our possession of Him; and our hearts cry out: "I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine" (ch. 6:3). We begin to see that we have given ourselves to the Lord to be forever His. That He has not only given Himself to us, but that He requires from us yieldedness and separation, with the consciousness that we are no longer our own, but have been bought with a price. Only this attitude can bring us under His control so that His purpose can be carried out and His Name glorified.

It is precious to know that the Lord is ours; in the first days of our Christian life, this thought fills us with rejoicing and praise. We are not unmindful that we are His, but this has not yet entered into our consciousness as it does afterward. It is when we have been dealt with, and when we have passed through hard things; it is when, through some dealing of God, our responsibility toward Him breaks more fully upon our understanding, that the fact that we are His, also begins to fill our spiritual horizon.

We are seeing more clearly that though Jesus Christ has bought us with His blood, and has given Himself to us, it is God's supreme purpose that we shall be given over to Him. He has stretched forth His hand and laid it upon us, He is separating us from the world, and we begin to enter into the precious work of God in making us His own possession. These two passages (ch. 2:16; 6:3) set forth the first two steps in the life of communion between the soul and God.

It is after the bride has been caught up into an abiding place of communion with the Lord, "Among the chariots" of the Prince; and those about her have seen the glory of the Lord resting upon her; it is when they have seen the martyr's crown upon her head and have beheld her eyes with Heaven's peace and depth reflected in them, that she says: "I am my Beloved's; and His desire is toward me."

These are the three wonderful and mysterious steps in the life of communion between the bride and Christ. First, we rejoice because He is ours; then, as we draw nearer, there is deep joy and rest in the consciousness that we are His in life or death, for all His will to be done in our lives. Finally, our consuming satisfaction is, that we are not only His, but that His desire is toward us. Though we know from the first that we are His, we have not entered into it until we have partaken in His sufferings. At the beginning, we have rejoiced that He is ours, we have known that we were His, but we have not entered into it.

Much of the time in our spiritual babyhood, we have girded ourselves and have gone where we desired; we have not yet apprehended what it means to take up our cross and follow after Him; we have not yielded to Him, the Crucified, that He may take out of us every movement of our own desires. We do not yet discern that we are girding ourselves and going whithersoever we will, and that if we join the blest company of the bride of the Lamb, our own girding must forever cease, and His girding must begin and go on until He decides all things for us, and we have no way nor say in our lives.

Truly does another gird us and carry us whithersoever we would not. Oh, what joy does this girding bring us as He carries us where He wills, and we begin to understand it. Though it is not where we would go ourselves, it is whithersoever *He* wills to take us. We begin to realize that we belong to Him, as His constraining love and hands are stretched out and laid upon us until we have decreased and He has increased.

We enter into the rest and satisfaction of belonging to Him, and we begin to taste the sweetness of suffering for His sake. We have proved that even one curl of our locks of separation can hold the King of Glory. We are walking

along the narrow way with eyes fixed upon Him, with the reflection of His glory and image becoming more apparent upon us at every step.

We have been bought with a price, not with silver nor gold, but with the precious blood as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the Blood of Christ. Very close must we approach unto Him, with all our hearts must we yield to Him at every step, if we would apprehend that His desire is toward us. God would have us abiding in this place.

What one of God's children that has followed Him with any depth of love and obedience, cannot recognize the milestones that mark the progress of the soul in its journey, from the first day of salvation, to that day when the work is done and all prepared for the Coming of the Lord. It is only on the strait and narrow way, that we shall find these milestones. If we do not journey along that path all the time, there are some of these precious experiences that we shall miss, and we shall have to retrace our steps if we would have all that the Lord has for us.

7:11, 12. **"Come, my Beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see whether the vine hath budded, and its blossom is open, and the pomegranates are in flower: There will I give thee my love."**

THE GARDEN OF THE FIELDS. This is the fourth garden that is mentioned in this book; and, as we have said in the introduction, the gardens and vineyards are synonymous, meaning "The Kingdom of God." We see that at this time, there is the bud and the flower, the newly ripened fruit, and the old preserved fruit. Everything is found in this garden excepting spices. In the first chapter of Acts, Christ tells His followers that they shall be His witnesses, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

One meaning of the word, "witnesses," is, "martyrs." There is a significance in here which shows that it is not over an easy and smooth path that the Spirit-filled and Spirit-called servant of God walks as He preaches the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is with suffering and persecution, that God's faithful servants proclaim the gospel. Only as the mouth of the bride is as the best wine that moveth, or goeth down, smoothly; only as it is kept for her Beloved alone, with the power and life-giving stream in it that will make the lips of those that are dead or asleep to speak, can the bride go forth with the gospel message and have her Beloved with her.

First, she brings Him home to her mother's house, she proclaims the glad tidings to those in Jerusalem, then to Judæa and to Samaria; but as she draws closer to Him, her soul goes out to the uttermost parts of the earth. Her heart goes out for the Vineyard of the Lord, and she cries: "Come, my Beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages." She does not say, "let *me* go forth," but "let *us* go forth." Even in going forth into His vineyard, the thought and desire that are uppermost in the consecrated soul, are the communion which she will have with her Lord in her labors.

She is not going forth for a short time, she is not going for a visit, but she is going forth to remain and to lodge in the villages. It is not that part of the vineyard which is near her home, but it is far away among the fields. Her heart is longing that all others may know her Beloved and love Him as she loves Him. She would publish to the ends of the earth and to all peoples and tongues, the glad tidings of this great salvation, and what the Lord has done for her. She would so make Jesus Christ her righteousness, that she may shine, as the brightness of the firmament, in the darkest places. Through personal work and prayer, through imparting to the support of the Lord's work both at home and

abroad, she would be instrumental in turning many to righteousness, that she may shine as the stars forever and ever (Dan. 12:3).

The thought in these verses is not only of the Lord's great Vineyard; but the life and soul of every child of God is a vineyard within God's Vineyard. There is deep love expressed in the application of this passage to the individual soul, and there are many precious lessons to be learned. Every Christian must partake of God's Word and must live it until it is being manifested in the life, before God can use him to lead others to the Lord and into deeper experiences and knowledge of God. With deep intent does the bride call upon her Beloved to go forth with her that she may give Him her love; He must go with her, He must walk with her, He must work with her. He must work within her, revealing Himself and leading her on to partake in the fellowship of His sufferings. At every step, He must help her test the power of His resurrection that she may become conformed to His death.

She would have Him go forth with her, not only to those parts of her life which are plainly seen and manifested, but she would have Him go with her to those recesses and places that are hidden away; to those places in her life that seem distant and covered up. She would have Him go with her that He may see if the fruit of the Spirit is growing there. She would have Him make manifest the true condition of her own life and soul.

Many times we judge our own lives and our progress by a few signs of attainment or of shortage. But if we would ask the Lord to go with us in the fields, to hold us still in the by-places and in the villages, we would discover those spots in our lives that need His discerning and quickening power. How many times we should find that it was not as it appeared on the outside. We should find that the

plants needed attention, and that the little foxes were hiding away, injuring and destroying the vine.

It is so easy to see the parts of other people's vineyards that are not flourishing, but God wants us, first of all, to behold the undergrowth and weeds in our lives. We cannot stop with that which is the most easily searched out, but we must search out the distant parts; those places that need much searching and conviction by the Power of God, for us to see them just as they are.

"The pomegranate" is a symbol of humility (ch. 4:3). It is one of the most beautiful and delicious of all natural fruit, and it is one of the rarest and most precious of all spiritual fruit. Without this beautiful fruit of humility, none of us shall enter in; and we must carefully watch, and pray for every blossom. How often we find, lurking in hidden places and distant corners of our lives, the damnable pride that will devour every pomegranate blossom of dealing from the Lord, through which He would give us an abundant fruitage of Humility.

Not only this, but the bride desires to see if the beautiful attributes of Jesus Christ have budded and are thriving and growing in her life; she would have all the graces and fruit of the Spirit flourishing and bearing an hundredfold fruit to the glory of God. She beseeches her Beloved to go forth with her through her vineyard. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

It is not the things that lie on the surface of her life, that she would have Him search out, but those things that He alone can find. They are hidden away in the byways and hedges; and sometimes they are in what is, figuratively, a distant part of her vineyard. It is not only the little fields in her life that she mechanically tends every day that she

would have Him search out, but those fields that require a long spiritual journey, a long course of dealing and uncovering to reach. Then must she abide there with her precious Lord in submission and communion, until every condition is discerned and made right.

As she yields to His voice, He points out all that must be done, and deeper thoughts and yearnings are planted in her heart; new plants of adoration toward Him, of obedience and separation. As she abides with Him, submissive and yielded to every dealing, no matter how keen the pain, or how low she is brought, she finds that the pomegranate is in flower and is giving promise of abundance of fruit. It is for this that the Lord has chosen us to go and bear fruit, and that our fruit should abide, and that it may be treasured and preserved for our Beloved.

As is brought out in this portion of the Song of Solomon, with the individual soul, there is the cry in the heart, that the Lord shall go forth and make manifest the true condition of the life; that He will stir us up to greater zeal in carrying out His will, and give greater strength to live for His glory alone. When the Lord answers our cry and goes out with us, we find that there is no way of covering up any portion of the vineyard of our lives, or protecting that which is not to His glory so that it shall not be dealt with. How we praise God for His faithfulness. How we thank Him that He does not allow us to cover up and adorn with flowers, some ill-conditioned and ill-smelling place in our vineyards, which must be dug up and perhaps carried far, far away, out of the enclosure of our lives.

Though the buds and the blossoms are much to rejoice over, we must watch these promises of fruit and tenderly care for them. We must let no neglect and failure to water them with our prayers, no rough handling and picking them in order to make a display, blast the fruit. Without fruit, the

blossoms are in vain, and their beauty of no profit either to God or to us. Our hearts should continually cry: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Let us rejoice when there is bud and blossom; let us thank Him when He lets us see the little green fruit; let us humbly give Him the glory when there is ripe fruit in our lives. Let us not be discouraged if we do not find fully ripened fruit on the vine that He has just pruned, or upon the plants that our Heavenly Father has just planted. The bud must come before the blossoms; the blossom must come before the tiny, immature fruit appears; the little green fruit must come before it can ripen and be perfected, and the fruit must be ripe and perfect before we can preserve it for the Master's use and for His glory.

The bud and blossom, the green and partly ripe fruit, are all perfect if they are growing and going on in God's way, although none of these are fit to pick except the fully ripened fruit. But if there is nothing but buds and blossoms, God is robbed of the glory, and we are as barren as though they had not appeared. It is precious and encouraging to remember that every attribute of our dear Lord, and every fruit and grace of the Spirit along every line, must begin with the bud and blossom. Their growth is slow and imperceptible, and there is no way to force them to mature before God has fully pruned and tended them.

How our hearts long that we may nourish the buds until they flower, and guard the flowers until the fruit appears; that we may protect the fruit until it is ripe, and carefully gather and preserve it. How we yearn to have all manner of fruits, both new and old, both fresh and preserved, laid up for our Beloved. Our precious Lord is the True Vine in our souls, and the bride should have an abundance of fruit

laid up for Eternity. She should have fruits of repentance which need not to be repented of; this precious fruit comes from the dealing of God, and it leads to humility and doing His will.

There is the fruit of faith working by love, which binds us to the Lord and opens the way for us to possess all that He has for us. As we watch and tend this and all other fruit that should be growing upon the vine in our vineyard, our love is drawn out more fervently to the Lord of the Vineyard. Do we realize that we are laying up fruit in Eternity, and that God has it put away and preserved in His storehouse?

7: 12, 13. **"There will I give Thee my love. The mandrakes give forth fragrance."** The mandrakes are love apples, and also are said to increase fruitfulness. It is when the bride has gone forth with the Lord through the length and breadth of the vineyard of her own life, that she gives Him her love and adoration, and the fragrance of the fruit of love (symbolized by the mandrake, or the love apple) goes forth continually. It is not the works of the flesh that are fragrant, but the fruit of pure divine love. When she has let the Lord deal with her until the pleasant plants and vines are thriving and bearing fruit for His glory, He can trust her to go forth with Him in His great Vineyard and be a co-worker together with Him in the lives of others. It is when He has laid His pruning and dealing hand upon her, that her love goes out more fervently; and it is then, that the mandrakes, or love apples, give forth their fragrance; and as she partakes of His love, her fruitfulness is increased and multiplied for His glory.

She is eager to go forth, she would go when the dew is on the grass, she would go "early," which means with fervent love and alacrity. She would not be negligent in doing the work of the Lord, for, "Cursed is he that doeth

the work of the Lord negligently." It is a joy to go forth from all other interests and follow the Lord through His Vineyard, whether it is on the foreign field or in the home field. There is the sweetness of His presence and of being drawn nearer to Him, which the earnest soul feels, and which is past expression or understanding. But that which really increase this joy and soul happiness, are the hardships and the persecution, the hard things through which we must pass, as we leave all and go out to lodge with Him alone; and to work for, and with Him alone.

The keen suffering does not come from the separations, but from being misunderstood by those who have loved us, and who perhaps also love the Lord. It is the suffering, caused by the dying out through which most of us go when we relinquish all hope of having those about us understand the call which we have received, and the ministry for which our dear Lord has chosen us. Only through love can we lay up fruit for our Beloved, for it is through love alone that we can bear fruit. As we abide in Him and He abides in us, as His word abides in us and is made flesh in our lives, we ask whatsoever we will and it is done for us; and we bear much fruit for His glory.

One of the most precious thoughts in here is, that all the fruit that is brought to maturity is carefully taken care of and preserved for our Beloved. Many of God's children make the mistake of considering the fruit-bearing as all-important; and when they have ripe and partly ripe fruit in their lives, they sit down and rejoice over this, becoming puffed up because of what the Lord has done for them. In the place of diligently preserving the fruit through faith in Christ, so that it shall remain for the glory of God, to be used for Him and offered to Him; it is left without care until it either falls off altogether, or decays on the vines.

We see and hear evidences of this neglected fruit in the

assemblies of God's people, as the testimonies go forth concerning what God did in their lives five, ten, or twenty years ago. But it is easily seen that whatever fruit they had, or however great the dealing of God was at that time (and many times, distance has multiplied the experience entirely out of proportion to the facts in the case), they have not even a small sample preserved. They have nothing to show as proof of the handiwork of God.

God would have us carefully preserve every dealing and everything He has done in our lives, that nothing be lost. There is not only preserved fruit of many days past in this vineyard, but there is green fruit that will soon ripen, there is also the bud and the blossom. There is fruit in all stages of growth; from the dealing of God which makes the little shoot push its head through the soil of our lives, to the perfect, ripe fruit ready to be offered to our Beloved; and which we are carefully watching lest it should spoil or sour, even after it is preserved.

If we get our eyes upon that which has been perfected in our lives, we shall become puffed up; we shall lose the zeal and determination to press on unto the perfection, for which we must strive as long as we are in these bodies of our humiliation. If we look at the buds alone, we shall become discouraged because they are not perfected, and we see that there is no perfect fruit to offer to our Beloved.

God would have us keep our eyes upon Jesus; though there may be much fruit, ripe and preserved, we must not cease for a moment in our earnest determination to press forward and enter into all God is willing to do for us. We must have our eyes fixed upon the Lord of the harvest, we must apprehend that He alone knows how much He is able to work out in our lives. Though there is nothing ripe and ready to preserve, though there is nothing worthy to offer to Him, He who has begun the good work will also finish it.

CHAPTER XLII

LONGING FOR THE PRESENCE OF THE BRIDEGROOM. 8:1-4.

8:1. **"Oh that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! When I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yea, and none would despise me."** Historically, this is immediately after the Lord's ascension, and sets forth the fervent love and desires of those whom He had left behind. They longed for His return, and the renewal of the personal contact and companionship which they had had with Him before His death. The disciples of Jesus Christ had had the sweetest and most intimate companionship with Him while He was here on earth; they had lived with Him day by day, remonstrating with Him, and even taking Him to task when they could not understand Him and His words. This intimacy never passed the tomb in which He lay.

While He was on earth, He was in the body of His humiliation and so were they, therefore, they could meet upon a common ground. After He came forth from the tomb, His body was a spiritual human body; and they could not meet Him on the same ground until they, too, should lay aside the mortal and put on their spiritual body. We believe that this is one reason why He was never in the same relation to the disciples after He arose from the dead.

Many of God's children swing over too far one way or the other in this matter of the resurrection. Some believe that Jesus is a Spirit, and that since His resurrection, there is nothing about Him that partakes of humanity. Others

go too far in recognizing His humanity. If we get to the Word of God it will always set us right concerning everything we need to know. "Resurrection" always signifies the raising of the *body* from the tomb, and does not apply to a person's spirit, which goes to God who gave it as soon as it leaves the body. It was not the Spirit of Jesus Christ but His body that was raised from the dead. Even the marks of the nails and of the spear remained, although His body had become spiritual.

When the Lord was received up into Heaven, it was not a spirit that ascended, but it was the same Jesus who had appeared to the disciples, and had eaten with them since His resurrection. As the disciples stood listening to the words of Jesus Christ, as they saw the marks of the nails in His hands and feet, as they beheld the mark of the spear in His side, which proved Him to be their beloved, crucified Lord, suddenly He was caught away from them; and two men stood by them in white apparel. These angels, or messengers of God, said to them: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into Heaven, *this Jesus,* who was received up from you into Heaven, shall so come IN LIKE MANNER as ye beheld Him going into Heaven."

Many years after Christ ascended to the Father, we are told that "There is one God, one mediator also between God and men, a man, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:5). We are not told that He *was* a mediator or that He *was* a man, but that He *is* a mediator and that He *is* a man.

Whatever changes took place in His body, from the time He died to the time He ascended to the Father, we know that it was a human body that came forth out of the tomb, and yet it was a spiritual body; it was not circumscribed by any limitations, to which it had been subject before His death. The same body that came forth out of the grave went up

into Heaven. And as soon as He was received into Heaven and took His place at the right hand of God, He was again clothed in His glory and majesty, which were afterward seen by Paul, John and others.

During the time He was on earth after His resurrection, He wrapped Himself in His majesty in such a way, that awe and reverence filled the hearts of His disciples. When they would have entered into closer intimacy, or would have constrained Him to be to them as He was before His death, He vanished out of their midst.

This verse also finds response in the hearts of God's children who are upon earth today, as an expression of their fervent love and longing for the return of Christ. Those who are following hard after Him are looking forward to the time when they shall forever be with the Lord and shall enter into an intimacy with Him, which will be as much beyond the love and relation between the disciples and Christ before His death, as Heaven is higher than earth. We shall see Him as He is and we shall be like Him. The body of our humiliation shall be conformed to the body of His glory through the working of His power, by which He is able even to subject all things unto Himself. There will be no limitations nor weaknesses then, nothing to hinder nor mar our relation with our precious Bridegroom.

Though we find deep satisfaction in the sweet communion that we have with Him, and the secret converse we have together as He journeys with us through the wilderness, many times our hearts long for a closer touch with our dear Lord. No words can express the rapture that is ours as we walk and talk with Him by the way; but we yearn for the Eternal Day when time shall be no more, and all veils of flesh and earth shall forever pass away.

There are times when He makes Himself so real that our small capacity can hardly stand the strain of such revela-

tions. It is as though we were bringing a pint cup to receive the waters of Niagara; even the earthen vessel is almost carried away. But a day is coming when our capacity shall be so enlarged, that we can receive the full revelations of our dear Lord and the glories that are His; and He will give us such revelations of the Father that we shall indeed enter into His joy and glory. Then we shall see Him face to face, and shall behold all things clearly, with nothing between to obscure the vision.

There has never been a child of God that has been hungry for the Lord and has desired to go on with Him, who has not had times of keen longing for a closer touch and a clearer revelation of Him as the suffering Saviour; they have longed to behold Him as "The Man Christ Jesus." Not only did those who beheld Him and walked with Him while He was on earth, feel this desire to see Him again and talk with Him face to face; but the human heart always craves a clearer revelation of Jesus Christ that can be discerned even now and here. It is when we have this hunger, this reaching out and striving to pass the veil that hides Him from our eyes, and covers Him from our touch, that we cry: "Oh that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother!"

The bride would have Him in the nearest relation, even that of a brother who is the son of the same mother and has been nourished from the same breast. Truly, we are going on to know our dear Lord as God and as the mighty Word of God; we are beginning to know Him as our Saviour and as our Heavenly Bridegroom. But when the burden is heavy, and we cannot understand the mists that settle around us, and the storms that sweep our paths, our hearts cry out for a clearer revelation of "The Man Christ Jesus." We would know Him as the "One that hath been in all points tempted like as we are;" the One that can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," because of that which He

passed through for our sakes. Our souls long for a deeper revelation of Jesus Christ as our Great High Priest who ever liveth to make intercession for us.

Because of these heart-cries, our Lord sometimes reveals Himself to us more clearly in this manward relation; and this comforts and enourages us to endure for His sake, and to press on despite all opposition of the enemy. Only those who have drawn near and are abiding in touch with Jesus Christ, can know the bliss of that inward communion that the Christian enjoys who is following hard after the Lord. Eye hath not seen, neither ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them who love Him. There are deep things and experiences for us while here on earth; and there are exceedingly great things that will be ours in the ages to come.

When the Lord had ascended, the disciples felt the separation between themselves and their Lord, who had gone away and left them here in the wilderness. When He laid aside His mortal body, He laid aside all the limitations He had taken upon Himself, but His disciples were left with all their imperfections and limitations. We can but feel the difference between our dear Lord and ourselves. This hunger and desire merge into the longing for His Second Coming, when this intimacy will be renewed and entered into with greater vigor, not through Christ becoming like the bride (which alone made the first intimacy possible), but through the bride becoming like Christ.

In this first verse, the bride says that if she finds Him, she will bring Him home to her mother's house and that she will kiss Him. Sometimes we get a human idea of the language used in the Bible to describe our relation to God and to His Christ. It is because the kiss is the token of the closest relation and intimacy between human beings, that the Holy Spirit uses it here of the Bridegroom and the bride.

It is a figure of the tender relation and love that are between the bride and Jesus Christ even in this life; and which will be given and received in perfection throughout eternal ages. At some time or another, whether understood or not, there is in every human heart a hunger for divine love and a closer relation and vision of God and the eternal things. Those who know God, understand this hunger; and as they yield to it, God works in their souls.

The wife has a right to kiss her husband, and the wife of the Lamb has a right to kiss her Husband. It is at His Second Coming that the marriage supper will take place, and then none shall be able to despise her when she kisses her Heavenly Bridegroom. Only one person is recorded as kissing the Lord's face while He was here upon earth, and that was Judas. Some of the virgins of the bride kissed His feet, but there was not this intimate spiritual relation which was ushered in at the crucifixion, when Jesus Christ betrothed His bride unto Himself, and of which His last discourse to them so strongly savors. This foretaste of intimacy, together with that communion which is between every virgin of the bride and her Lord, will merge into the close and perfect love and oneness, which will bind the bride and Christ together at His Second Coming.

8:2. **"I would lead Thee, and bring Thee into my mother's house, who would instruct me** (or "that Thou mightest instruct me"); **I would cause Thee to drink of spiced wine, of the juice of my pomegranate."** The bride longs for the presence of her Beloved, not only for her own sake, but also that she may bring Him home to her mother's house, and that others may know the joy that is hers. This refers both to the human race, or sinners; and to those whose mother is the Jerusalem that is above, but who have not gone on into the deep things of God. When we feed upon the Lamb and partake in His sufferings, when we draw close

enough to Him to hear His voice and enter into the hunger here set forth, we long for others to taste of the joy that is ours. When we see God's children who are shallow and have not had deep experiences and communion with Him, our hearts long for them to be deepened into Him and for them to enter into that communion and fellowship with Him, which all shall have, who are ready at His Second Coming, and who will go in to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Only Jesus Christ can instruct and guide us in the way in which we should go. If we would be instructed by Him, we must bring Him home to live with us continually; we must walk with Him by the way, and He will teach us and open up the Scriptures to us. In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and in Him we are made full. He not only teaches and instructs us, but He is our example. As we listen to His voice and His instructions, as we follow Him, we find that He is all we need.

He is the Wisdom of God and He is made unto us wisdom from God. If we would have Him instruct us, we must watch with unslumbering eyes and unabated zeal before His gates; we must wait untiringly before the posts of His doors, hearkening continually to His voice and obeying His words. How careless we are about knowing and listening to the voice of the Lord. We can hardly realize how our onward progress has been hindered by this slothful indifference. Many of God's children take it for granted that they can never know the voice of God, and they depend upon others for their guidance. This is most dangerous. Those who know God the most intimately, who listen and recognize His voice the quickest, are the most loath to give advice and to direct others.

Others think that every thought and imagination that comes into their minds, is God speaking; and these are they

who always get leadings and messages for those about them, and are most self-confident in giving them out, solicited or unsolicited. The condition and result in the one case are as lamentable as in the other; for neither really gets what God has for them, and they are deceived and cheated by the enemy.

In this longing for the Second Coming of the Lord, the bride declares that she would cause Him to drink of her spiced wine, which refers to the marriage supper. When the Lord instituted the last supper just before He was crucified, He commanded us to eat and drink it in remembrance of Him and to observe it until He comes again. Most solemnly does He declare that He will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when He will drink it new with His disciples in His Father's Kingdom (Matt. 26:29). Only these two suppers are mentioned; the one is the betrothal supper, the cup of union with Him, which looks forward to the marriage. The other is the marriage supper of the Lamb.

It is for the marriage that the bride is longing, and for the day when He will drink the cup new with her in His Father's Kingdom. There is every fragrance and perfume in this spiced wine. All the spices of His attributes and of the incense which were His before the Father's face, have been added to this New Wine of the Kingdom.

Together with these spices which come to her, and which He will drink with her in the New Wine of the Kingdom, she will give Him the juice, or "the sweet wine," of her pomegranate. The "pomegranate," used as the precious symbol of the bride's humility in both the descriptions of the bride by the Bridegroom, is the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit. And the word, "juice," comes from a root which means "to trample, squeeze, to bruise." This describes the process of extracting the juice from the fruit,

preparatory to making wine. The value and life of all fruit is in the juice; when that is extracted, the pulp that remains is not edible and is soon discolored and decays.

But there is a deep spiritual meaning in here, and that is the description of the process through which the precious vintage of inward humility is brought forth for the Lord. It is through many hard things, through much bruising and bringing down, that this costly wine of humility is made and perfected for our Beloved. If the bride of the Lamb would offer to her Beloved the vintage of this eternal fruit, she must pass through the hard processes which alone can bring forth the life of pure humility.

There will be the pressure and bruising that come from the people and things around her. There will be the purifying pressure that God's hand will bring to her as He chastens and brings her low. It is the trampling and bruising that almost presses out life itself, which brings forth the sweet wine of the pomegranate.

When wine is made from any fruit, it requires large quantities of the fruit to make a small quantity of juice. So it is with the wine of the pomegranate. All the fiber and hard particles must be taken out, so that only the pure juice remains, which symbolizes the pure humility that is unmixed with fleshly humility; or with any pride because of the work that the Spirit has done upon us; or with any other adulteration.

How little God's children have understood what the humility of Jesus Christ really means. There has been much voluntary humility and doing penance; much self-effort in striving to be humble. But the humility that comes from Jesus Christ, begins within. Those in whom God is working and perfecting this precious fruit, are unconscious of that which God is doing. They only see the instruments He is using, and the need of meekness and contrition. Noth-

ing is as essential to receiving all God has for us, as this incorruptible robe of humility. Whatever else we must have, and whatever other relation we must enter into, this is indispensable.

Not only natural and worldly pride hinders us entering in, but the worst of all is spiritual pride. This has caused more of God's people and servants to fail Him, than all else combined. Although God may have used some of His servants or children and done much for them along every line, it is fatal to any further working and entering in, for them to take a place of superiority, as though they have attained to more than any one else, and are especially favored from God.

It is not by chance, that, in the words the Spirit puts into the mouth of the bride of Christ, He links together the spiced wine of the marriage supper and the sweet wine of the pomegranate; for they cannot be separated. The fruit of the pomegranate must be perfected in our lives, and the pure juice extracted through much testing and suffering, if we are to partake of the spiced wine which symbolizes the marriage supper of the Lamb.

8:3, 4. **"His left hand should be under my head, and His right hand should embrace me. I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, until He please."** This entreaty to the daughters of Jerusalem occurs three times in this book; but this relation between the Bridegroom and the bride is only experienced once in the Song of Solomon (ch. 2:6). In the passage we are now considering, the bride is not experiencing the support of His left hand and the working of His right hand as she did when He took her into His Banqueting House. She is longing for a closer touch, and to again enter into this experience. She is longing for the return of her Beloved, which really means the Second Coming of Christ, when she will enter into the fullness of the presence of the Lord.

Many times the Lord takes us into a close relation with Him, even when we have not reached maturity. It seems to me that it is thus the Lord woos us on to greater abandonment and speed. There have been times when we have gone far beyond the place where He first met us in some special way, and we really know Him much better than we have ever known Him, but we look back and long for the experience He gave us at some time in the past. We have become more humble; we have seen our shortage so much greater, that it appears as though we had made little, if any progress. We have beheld the needs in our lives more clearly with every onward step, and as we remember our first deep experience of His love and presence, it seems as though we had gone back rather than forward, and we long for the return of that first experience when we tasted and found that the Lord was good.

When He took the bride into His Banqueting House, He revealed to her that she need not fear, for the left hand of His support and providence was under her head; while the right hand of His working, dealing, and manifest undertaking for her, was carrying out His will upon her and in her life. It is no less so now. Far more is His hand of providence upholding her now, and His dealing and protecting hand working in her life. She may never again enter into the same realization of it that she experienced in the Banqueting House (ch. 2:4-7), until He comes and takes her unto Himself. Then, if she should be permitted to trace the way over which she has passed, she will find that His hands have never been withdrawn, though she has not always discerned them and has been constrained to walk by faith rather than by feelings or by sight.

There is a cry and a feeling of homesickness in the hearts of God's earnest children, which is really a longing and watching for the Coming of the Lord. Many do not un-

derstand the meaning of this feeling, but I believe this will be the experience of every one who is in the bride, and that it will increase as His Coming draws near.

How often, when our hearts long for a closer, more tangible touch from our Lord, when we reach out with our hands that we may touch Him, that we may cling to Him more closely, that He may be more real to us, do we suddenly apprehend that though we see Him not, though we feel Him not, though we hear Him not, we are really beholding Him who is invisible. We really feel His left hand upholding us and know that His right hand is molding and shaping us; we hear His steppings and His voice that is as the sound of a gentle stillness.

To the purified soul, this spiritual relation is as real and satisfying as that which is more perceptible to the senses and to the natural. The rest and peace that are wholly in the Spirit, are manifold more real and more precious than all else into which we have ever entered; and we only enter it as we walk by faith. We know, also, that it is but the opening of the door into the eternal relation; it is but the beginning of that which will only find its fruition in those ages that are to come.

It is because of this, that the bride again adjures the daughters of Jerusalem not to stir up nor awake her Love until He please. She has been longing for a repetition of that first ecstatic experience in the Banqueting House, when He revealed Himself to her. But she is beginning to apprehend that He is the same, yesterday, today and forever; He changes not though the consciousness of His presence and of His love may fluctuate with her faithfulness, her progress, her faith. With Him there is no variableness nor shadow that is cast by turning.

We may not feel His hand of providence supporting us while we are in the midst of suffering, and when we are

going through hard things. We may not know it is His hand that is molding and chiseling us, that is shaping and purifying us. We do not always apprehend these precious things. But blessed is that child of God who knows that the hand of his Beloved is sustaining him, though he may not feel its pressure. Blessed is that one who sees back of all that touches his life, the hand of God working out His will and purifying him for His glory.

Though we do not feel His hand under us, let us adjure all around us that they shall not stir up nor grieve Him. Though we do not have the ecstacy that we have had at other times, let us believe that He is there and that He is working just as much as though we could see Him, and let us fear lest we hinder or stop that which He is doing in our lives.

Canticle Five. *Ch. 8:5-14*

CHAPTER XLIII

THE BRIDE, WEAK IN HERSELF, BUT STRONG IN HIM, IS GIRDED AND CARRIED BY HER BELOVED. 8:5, 6.

8:5. "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?" We cannot too insistently and repeatedly impress upon the reader, that, whether it be with the individual soul, or with the company of virgins who make up the bride, the whole motive and theme of the Song of Solomon is the relation and communion between Christ and His bride.

Historically, we have come to the call of the Gentiles and setting aside, for a season, of the Jewish people. This Canticle begins at the fifth verse, and describes the manifestation of the firstfruit of the Church and of God's chosen vessels.

What wonder and amazement seized upon all who beheld the Apostolic Church in the first days of its power, beginning with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon believers, which commenced on the day of Pentecost; and the manifestation of the mighty working of God that followed. All who beheld three thousand added to the church in one day, inquired: "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?" Just as this question was asked concerning the Lord Jesus Christ when He came back from the wilderness full of the Holy Spirit and power, after having

been tempted of Satan, (ch. 3:1 ff.) so was the same question asked concerning the early church and the apostles.

The other apostles asked this question concerning Paul when he came up from Arabia where he remained three years, being taught of the Lord so that he might bear His name "before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel."

There is a meaning in this fifth verse that applies to every one who goes through with the Lord. God leads us through many testings in order to perfect our faith and reliance upon Him. Like Jacob, when we begin to follow the Lord, we are not afraid to wrestle with an angel or even the Lord Himself. But as the night advances, and we see the approach of Eternal Day, as we realize that there is much to be done, and that our efforts are getting us nothing, we cry to God for help. He gives us the greatest boon He can give us; He touches the seat of our strength, and we find the power of our own goings has been taken away. Helpless, limping where we were once strong, we hold on to the skirts of His garments with our prayers, with love for our precious Lord, and with a consuming desire for God to be glorified, which prayers and longings are all we have left; and we receive His blessing.

That for which we were wrestling and striving, is given us when we reach the end of ourselves. We are never strong again in the place where God touched our strength; but limping and helplessly leaning upon our Beloved, we realize that "the lame take the prey." When we are weak, then are we strong.

Do we not hear one virgin of the bride beseeching the Lord that He will remove the messenger of Satan, which was given him that he might not be exalted? The Lord said to him: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness;" and this virgin of the bride-chamber replied: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory

in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong."

It was because this virgin was leaning on his Beloved that he suffered such great things for His sake. "In labors more abundantly, in stripes above measure, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils from my countrymen, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in labor and travail, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness" (2 Cor. 11:23-33). "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know also how to abound: in everything and in all things have I learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want. I CAN DO ALL THINGS IN HIM THAT STRENGTHENETH ME" (Phil. 4:11-13).

How weak and yet how strong was this virgin of the bridechamber as he came up from the wilderness leaning on his Beloved. "At my first defense no one took my part, but all forsook me: may it not be laid to their account. *But the Lord stood by me, and strengthened me.*" As he reaches the last stage of his journey, and the shore of the Home-country is already in sight, we hear him say as he leans more heavily upon his Beloved: "I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith."

It is not in the first days of our Christian life, that we lean hard upon our Beloved and are willing and glad to be

helpless and weak. It is not in babyhood, that we have learned to lean upon God alone. Although our love goes out to Him, and we want Him to have His way, we have girded ourselves too long and gone whithersoever we desired. We have not learned to glory in our weakness, we have not learned to become weak that His strength may be made perfect.

The bride followed hard after her Beloved before she was enticed into slumber and grew indolent; although her heart did not sleep. But here we find her restored and purified; we find her beauty increased and her gaze fixed more steadfastly upon her Lord, as she yields more fully to the girding of His hand, and lets Him carry her whithersoever He wills. Her eyes are fixed upon Him more continuously, she has less confidence in herself and less will or wish of her own. Nothing matters if He is girding her, if His will is being done in her life, if He is supporting and guiding her every step.

She can decide nothing for herself, neither can she go where she pleases for she cannot walk alone. She has passed through many testings and trials, she has had deep fellowship with Him in His sufferings, and her strength has decreased. The self-reliance and self-sufficiency which were hers in the first days of her walk with Him, have been gradually broken down.

How dismayed we are when the hand of our Beloved begins to work upon us in this way. With what despair do we see our strength, our sufficiency, all in which we trusted and which we fondly hoped would be of service to the Lord, collapse and disappear under His dealing hand. Through what humiliation do we go as we fail in all our efforts and in all our projects. We do not at first discern that God is bringing us to the place where we can do nothing of ourselves, where we can speak nothing of ourselves. He would

bring us to the place where we are not sufficient to determine or decide anything, but ever cling to His arm and lean upon His breast in helpless abandonment.

Not only each individual comes up thus from the wilderness, but the company of virgins who make up the bride of Christ, finds that the world has more and more become a wilderness. The path grows more rugged as the bride journeys along, her strength becomes less and her weakness increases. She is looking upward with vision that is more purified, with heart set more fervently upon Heavenly things. The earth and the earthly are fading away; she is not looking at the things that are seen nor desiring aught that the world can give; but she is beholding the things that are unseen and eternal, and she is enduring as beholding Him who is invisible.

Her ears have heard the wafted strains of Heavenly music, her eyes have caught a gleam from the lights of the Eternal City, by faith she beholds the Lamb who is the light thereof. The hand of her Beloved is holding her more firmly and tenderly as her strength is growing less, and she leans upon Him with increasing weakness and distrust in herself, and with increasing love and faith in the strength of the right arm of His righteousness.

As the bride of Christ is made to lean more helplessly upon the arm of God, and trust in His strength alone, there is a sweetness in this helplessness which is past expression; and her love goes out to Him as it has never done before. She glories in her weakness, she rejoices in every hard thing that His strength may be made perfect in her weakness. The bride has reached the place where she can say: "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20).

She realizes that every joy and desire of her life, every aim and working is coming down from above. So entirely have her interests and desires, her love and longings been severed from the world and all about her; so perfectly have they been fixed upon the heavenly and eternal things, that it only needs a word from her Beloved for her spirit to joyfully follow the treasure of love and adoration, which she has laid up in Heaven. Her soul is going out for her Beloved. Already has the sound of the midnight cry gone forth: "Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him."

She realizes that she is not at the beginning of her homeward journey, neither is she at the middle of her course, but she has reached the last stage of her journey, she is nearing the end of the wilderness. She is already hastening to pack up the possessions God has given her and enabled her to acquire as she passed through the wilderness. She has rejected all that cannot pass over with her, and is guarding and adding to that which she will need when she reaches the end. She has carefully preserved the fruit God has given her, that she may offer it to her Beloved; she has obeyed and communed with Him until the air about her is heavy with the fragrance of the love apples.

As her Lord gathered spices in this wilderness to carry up to His Father, so she has gathered spices and precious powders of the merchantman, to carry up to her Lord. The precious fruits and wine of the pomegranate, the precious spices and powders, she has jealously stored away to bring out at the end of the journey. All who come near the bride of the Lamb, smell the fragrance that continually goes out from this heavenly cargo.

She not only has gathered these fruits and spices, but she has put on her sandals of the preparation of the gospel of peace; she has made herself ready and arrayed herself in the pure white linen; she has put on Jesus Christ so perfectly

that His image is shining out from every part of her life. She is crowned with the beautiful locks of separation to Him; she is crowned with the purple hair of the martyr and of the overcomer; she is looking with the eyes of the dove for the first ray of the dawn of His Coming.

Because of thus following on, her head is resting upon the breast of her Beloved, which is more precious than aught else. She is leaning upon His arm and relying upon His strength and love to protect and support her. She can do nothing of herself, but she can do all things in Him who strengthened her. She is all weakness and fainting in herself, but she has found His strength sufficient. She is pressed on every side, but He has not let her be straitened. She has been perplexed many times, but it has not been unto despair. Though the enemy has pursued her, her dear Lord has not forsaken her, neither has He let her be destroyed though she has been smitten.

She has borne about in her body the dying of her Lord until His life has been manifested, and she is coming up out of the wilderness with His image stamped upon her words, her actions, upon her whole being. She is ready to be changed and glorified at the first glance she shall catch of Him who has thus wrought for her and in her.

"Under the apple tree I awakened thee; there thy mother was in travail with thee, there was she in travail that brought thee forth." This is the only time the Bridegroom has spoken to the bride since she went to the garden of nuts. The bride was once under the tree of disobedience in the wilderness of sin. Through the drawing of God she sought salvation, and under the shadow of Christ, who is the only Apple Tree among all the trees of the forest of men (ch. 2:3), she found life when Christ found her.

As the sinner comes to Christ and to the foot of the cross, he partakes of the one fruitful Tree and receives life ever-

lasting. Only when he is sheltered in Christ and in His finished work, is he safe from the wrath of God. When he is dead through his trespasses and sins, he is awakened to newness of life by the voice of Christ speaking peace to his soul. As he lay under the tree of disobedience, he was helpless and could do nothing for himself; but Jesus Christ went out and found him in the wilderness of sin, and brought to him life more abundant. Near the end of the believer's journey through the wilderness, we again see him weak and helpless, not because of sin and death, but because of having died in Christ, to sin, death, and self. Though he is weak in himself at the end of his pilgrimage, he is strong in the One upon whom he is leaning.

It was when Christ hung upon the tree, that He became the one fruitful Tree. He tasted death for every man and was made perfect through sufferings in order that He might lead many sons to Glory. It was under the shadow of His cross, that we were found and were born again. It is there He found us, and it is there we found Him, the Man who is our hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest. It was there, that streams of living water were poured out in the dry place; from that moment the Rock followed us, and out of it, living streams are flowing more abundantly. This precious Rock became a shade in a weary land, and we hide away in the Rock, Christ Jesus, as we press forward on our Heavenward journey.

Sometimes our dear Lord takes us over those past experiences when He would have us "Remember all the way which Jehovah thy God hath led thee in the wilderness, that He might humble thee, to prove thee, to know what was in thy heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments or not" (Deut. 8:2). Not when we are disheartened because of our blackness and lack of likeness to our Lord, does He remind us of where He found us; but as we journey

along, He lets us see more clearly our undone and lost condition when He found us. He also takes us over the past that we may see how little we have apprehended and appropriated that which He has offered us.

8:6. **"Set me as a seal upon Thy heart, as a seal upon Thine arm."** For a fleeting moment, the Bridegroom is with the bride; but there is a deep fellowship that now binds them together, which does not depend upon conscious presence or absence. This passage is one of the most intense and passionate expressions of the love of the bride that is found in the whole book. It is evident that her words in the sixth verse look forward to a prolonged absence; and she is clinging to Him as love ever clings to the adored object when it is faced with an indefinite separation.

All her strength has gradually disappeared, and she is leaning upon His breast; her arm, or strength, finds support only in His arm, or strength. She would have the pressure of her head upon His bosom, remain ever before His eyes as the impress of a seal upon His heart and affections. She would have the pressure of her dependence upon Him remain as a seal upon His arm, or strength. As she looks forward to His departure to His Father's house, whither He goes to prepare a place for her, she implores Him to uphold her by His arm and to hold her in His heart, so that upon His breast and upon His arm shall she ever appear, as He stands before God in her behalf.

In the Jewish Tabernacle, the high priest always bore the names of the tribes of Israel upon his shoulders and upon his breastplate. The shoulders or arms are symbolic of strength, and the breastplate is symbolic of the heart and the affections. Whenever he went in and appeared before Jehovah, his shoulders and his breast were adorned with the precious stones, upon which were engraven the names of the tribes of Israel. This was a symbol of our High Priest, who bears us upon His heart and upholds us by His strength as

He stands before God; for "Christ has entered into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us."

The bride prays that she may be so engraven upon His heart and cherished within His affections, that she shall be before His eyes continually. There is also an allusion to the graven tablets which in those days were worn upon the breast, and to the seal worn upon the arm or hand, which were highly cherished and prized (Jer. 22:24; Hag. 2:23).

It is as our Beloved is continually in our minds and hearts, as our love goes out to Him in adoration and obedience, as we lean upon Him harder and harder, that we apprehend and enter into the rest and sweetness of being engraven upon His heart and shoulders. Upon His heart, that we may receive and rejoice in all His infinite love and faithfulness, with which He would surround us, and which He would extend in our behalf. Upon His arm, that all His power and strength may operate in our behalf and may work in our lives. He would have us so trusting Him that we should never be dismayed, knowing that whatever came He would take care of it. He would have the communion between us unbroken; then can we say that we are set as a seal upon His heart and arm.

None who are allowing any other to fill their hearts, shall be engraven upon the heart of their Lord. None who are trusting to any but their Lord, shall be set as a seal upon His arm. For the Lord is not going to bear about as a seal upon His heart and arm those who do not bear Him about in their hearts, and those who are serving Him with divided affection and strength. Not only is the bride a seal upon His arm and heart, but He has promised to set His seal upon her. "He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out thence no more: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God . . . and mine own new name" (Rev. 3:12).

CHAPTER XLIV

DIVINE LOVE AND JEALOUSY. 8:6, 7.

8:6, 7. **"For love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as Sheol; the flashes thereof are flashes of fire, a very flame of Jehovah. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, he would utterly be contemned."** This passage is often used to describe human love and jealousy. While human jealousy is cruel as Sheol, the meaning expressed here is altogether different. The literal translation of this passage is: "For love is mighty as death; jealousy is as exacting, or relentless, as Sheol."

There is much that is comforting and reassuring in the little word, "for," which introduces this description of divine love and jealousy. The bride has been imploring the Bridegroom to set her as a seal upon His arm and upon His heart. She knows that if she is as a seal upon His heart, His love, which is as strong as death, will ever hold her and uphold her. Nothing can snatch her from this tender place of privilege. She knows that if she is set as a seal upon His arm, His strength will support her, and His arm will fight all her battles. She also knows that with jealousy as exacting and unyielding as Sheol, He will hold His own possessions and protect His own seal, He will suffer neither man nor devil to use or mar or have any part in those who have become a seal upon His heart and arm.

That this is a description of divine love cannot be doubted when we are told that it is "a very flame of Jehovah." (R. V.) When the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost, it was

with tongues of fire. We are told in Deut. 4:24 that "Jehovah is a devouring fire, a jealous God;" also in Exodus 34:14, "Jehovah, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God." In many other places are we warned that God is a jealous God, and that He will avenge every infidelity of His people toward Him. He gives all, and He demands all. The love of Christ is stronger than death: "Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Do we not know with how strong a grasp, death holds its victim? Have we not experienced this when our loved ones have lain dead before us? Neither tears nor cries, neither prayers nor groans, could bring back from that silent, relentless grasp, the one who had been with us but a little while before. So is it with the love of God for His children; and so it should be with the love of His children for Him. Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ Jesus our Lord; none can snatch from His hand, those who obey and hide away in Him; those who are faithful unto the end.

This divine love appears cruel when it separates us from father and mother, from brother and sister, yea, from every earthly tie and dear one that comes between our precious Lord and ourselves. This love is cruel to all who would steal away even a little place in the life that belongs to God; and it is cruel most of all to the self-life of the believer himself.

It is the divine love, which has been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given unto us, that makes the bride of the Lamb cast aside all other ties that demand of her anything that is the right of her Lord alone. As we read the pages of God's Word, we see the holy zeal, which is the working of holy love toward God,

denying all others and all else a place when there is a choice between God and them. The tribe of Levi was chosen to minister before Jehovah in a special way because their love for Him moved them to destroy their brethren after the flesh.

When Jeremiah would not make mention of Jehovah nor speak in His Name, it was divine love in his heart that was as a burning fire shut up in his bones. It was this holy zeal and love that constrained him to speak all the words Jehovah commanded him to speak, and to obey Him though his life was one long span of persecutions and dungeons, of opposition from his people. It was this love and jealousy for the glory of God that moved upon Elijah to slay the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel. It was this love for Jehovah that is as strong as Sheol, and the jealousy for His glory and honor which is a very flame of Jehovah, that constrained Samuel to hew Agag in pieces before Jehovah in Gilgal.

Thus could we multiply the instances that are given of the love of God toward His people, and the jealousy of God for His honor and His holy Name. The same strong love and relentless jealousy for God's honor and glory, were manifested over and over in His faithful servants. God will not give His glory to another, He will not share our affections and our allegiance with any one or anything else.

How many times, when there is a choice between God and a dear one, between pleasing Him and pleasing another, God's people give less to Him than they do to their earthly friends. How often when there is a choice between giving to Him or to a dear one, between going to His house or remaining at home with a dear one who does not love Him, the allegiance is given to the earthly tie and against God. Those who will not pay the price to go through with Jesus, may do this and be saved as by fire; but God will not suffer this in the lives of those who get His best, and are chosen to be the bride of His Son.

Christ's love for those whom He has chosen to be His bride, is as strong as death or the grave. Not one right will He relinquish in favor of the dearest earthly tie; not one shade of love and fidelity will He share with any one or anything else. All we have and all we are, must be given to Him and must be for Him alone. Let us always remember that this description will not apply to the experiences and relation between *every* believer and the Lord; but only to those who go through with Him, to those who become overcomers and sit with Him upon His throne (Rev. 3:21).

This love and jealousy are found not only with God toward His people, but the same love and jealousy take possession of all who yield to it, and make them jealous for Him and His glory. The word translated: "flashes," has the significance of flashes of lightning that strike an object; or sparks that strike, and either set on fire or consume the object struck. Thus it is with the divine love and jealousy The vehement flame, which is contained in the flashes and sparks that are sent out from divine love and jealousy, will consume all that opposes God, and will set on fire with divine fire and zeal, those who receive and yield to Him.

We can see here why it is that: "We love because He first loved us." The fire of God's love ignited these poor, cold hearts of ours; and kindled within us flames of love and zeal toward God. When the love of God is burning in our hearts, it not only goes out to God, whom we have not seen, but it leaps out to our brother, whom we have seen. It is like a mighty forest fire; it consumes and puts away all underbrush of earthly relations and useless growth of the flesh in our lives. It springs from branch to branch and kindles divine love and holy zeal in those about us.

The love of God is mighty and mysterious, not only when manifested from Him to us, but when found in His children. Those who could never love each other in the natural, nor

find anything in common with one another, are drawn together by bands that are woven from the everlasting love of God; bands that will abide throughout Eternity. Human love and ties, human relationships will pass away with earth and time, but this love and relationship come from the infinite God, and it is infinitely stronger than any human tie. It will never pass away, but will bear eternal fruit for the glory of God.

This "Flame of Jehovah" that is kindled in our hearts, is the beginning of the sweet unity and fellowship, the sweet communion of the Holy Spirit, which will bind us together in a bundle with our Lord, and will forever abide in perfection throughout endless ages. Let us ask God to take all human touch or taint out of our love for one another; thus shall we lay up in store this precious deposit received from the flames and sparks of divine love. And it shall be with us as it was with our precious Lord, the zeal for our Father's house and business will eat us up.

8:7. **"Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it."** In the Scriptures, the word "water" is often used as a figure of God's wrath and the visitations of His displeasure; also for trials and afflictions (Ps. 69:1; 42:7; 88:7). The word "floods" is used as a figure of extreme dangers (Ps. 69:15), also of the violent assaults of the devil (Isa. 59:19).

When we remember what our Lord passed through as He came and died for us, we see that many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. As He hung upon the Cross of Calvary, all the waves and the billows of God's wrath went over His head. All the floods of the devil and his hosts came up against Him as He wrought out the redemptive work which God had given Him to do. But none of these things quenched His love.

The prophetic words of the twenty-second Psalm con-

cerning the sufferings of Jesus Christ, sound forth the heart-cries of our Lord as He hung upon the Cross of Calvary. In the twentieth verse we read: "Deliver my soul from the sword, my darling (or "my only one") from the power of the dog." The word, "darling," in this verse, and the word, "one," which is applied to the bride of the Lamb in Song of Solomon 6:9, have the same meaning in the original text, although the same word is not used. The literal meaning is, "beloved, the united one, the one joined together." The darling one is a company composed of many, united into an "only one."

This significance has much depth and preciousness in it, when we remember that the bride of the Lamb is made up of many virgins; and that they are joined together as one. His body is one, but with many members. There is only one Church, which is "the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in Heaven;" but there are many millions who make up this Church.

All the waves and billows of God's wrath went over Jesus Christ when He hung and died upon the cross; and He cried to the Father: "Deliver my only one from the power of the dog," or the devil, which the word, "dog," means in this place. "I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me. . . . I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world, but that thou shouldest *keep them from the evil one,*" or as expressed in the twenty-second Psalm: "Deliver my darling from the power of the dog." Again we hear our precious Lord praying: "Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word . . . that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one." It was as He poured out His life, that He bore His darling one through the waves and billows of God's broken law and His wrath, and planted her upon the Rock of Ages. Now is her head lifted up above her enemies round

about her, and she shall offer in His tabernacle sacrifices of joy. Throughout endless ages she will sing praises unto the Lamb that was slain.

"If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, he would utterly be contemned." This is true only of the love of God for us and our love toward God. The same love that is in the Bridegroom is in the bride, and though one gave all the substance of his house in exchange for this love, he would be utterly contemned.

Though we speak with the eloquence of an Apollos, though we have the tongues of the archangels, without love we are become sounding brass and a clanging cymbal. Though we prophesy and know all mysteries and all knowledge, though mountains remove and vanish before our faith, without love we are nothing. Though we give our substance in small portions so as to make it reach as many poor as possible, though we give our body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth us nothing.

As set forth in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, how many are rejoicing in their knowledge and wisdom; how many are giving their substance to feed the poor; how many are doing penance and practicing austerities; how many are pouring out their lives in all kinds of "Works," but they have neither love for God nor for man. They are trying to work their way into Heaven, and in the place of loving confidence and trust in God, there is a slavish fear. They look upon God as a hard taskmaster, and imagine that He is watching to catch them in some delinquency, delighting to visit them with severe punishment. Their God is like unto themselves.

There is a peculiar condition that reveals how the love of God dwelleth in our hearts. When our love is burning strong and bright, and our hunger for our Beloved is deepening, we are more concerned to have Him work in us and make us to His glory, than we are to work for Him.

The children of God are so busy! so busy! They are running here and there as though the Lord could not get along without their officious help. One would think that the Lord is not as interested in His own Vineyard as they are. They are organizing, and bringing together all kinds of machinery to run the Lord's business; they are inventing intricate and clever systems to get men saved, and to entertain them so that they will remain saved (?). They find no time to pray; they spend no time in becoming acquainted with the Lord of the Vineyard.

The Spirit would woo them to draw close to the Lord, to learn to love Him; God would have them love Him with all their hearts and strength, and Jesus Christ is waiting to fill their lives so that naught could gain access to their hearts excepting that which comes from Him. He waits for them to give Him some of their time, He waits to be gracious to them; but they always put Him off, and while they are busy here and there He is gone (1 Kings 20:40).

After He is gone, they hardly know what has happened. They know that God is not wooing them as He once was; and they work for Him with increased zeal and energy in order to fill the vacancy that has been left in their lives by their disobedience and neglect of "the better part." They are deluded by the false hope that their fleshly energy and self-activities can take the place that has been left by the cooling off of their love, and the withdrawal of their Beloved. It would be profitable and wholesome to read the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians in the light of this condition just mentioned. God may reveal to us the cause of our increased activity for Him; we may find that it began when we drifted away from the place where He was working for us.

Child of God, if you feel that something has gone out of your life, if there seems to be a barrenness, do not try

to work harder for the Lord than you have ever done before; do not try to occupy all your time in self-appointed tasks in His Vineyard, or in caring for the souls about you. Let the conviction sink into your heart that your greatest need is to let God do something for you. *You* are the one who is in need of having something done, and not God. He is not in need of your sacrifices, for every beast of the forest is His and the cattle on a thousand hills. If He were hungry He would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are His. It is the sacrifice and service of thanksgiving and worship which alone are acceptable to Him. It is not in the life of some one with whom you think God is using you, that something needs to be done; but in *your own life* there is dire need and shortage, which only God can remedy.

Without exception, this barrenness and void in our lives is a sure proof that we are in great need of God's dealing hand, and that something is wrong with us. Therefore, let us leave everything that we can leave; let us leave the "Christian work," let us drop the busy overseeing of those about us, and let us get still before God that He may speak to us and work in us, and for us, to His glory. Then shall we go forth with the presence and power of God upon us, and while we shall be used of Him with those about us, we shall have learned to watch for His movings and dealings upon our own souls, and to always yield for Him to work in us first.

Though we give God all else, though we give Him our time, our money, our faculties and members; though we deprive ourselves of all but the bare necessities of life in order that we may impart to Him and to His work, and withal have not learned to love Him and to give Him the first place in our hearts and lives, we shall be utterly contemned. The Lord does not ask for anything excepting our affections and allegiance: "Give me thy heart" is the call of the Spirit to

every soul. When we give all else excepting our love, we are always moved by slavish fear instead of love. It is this same spirit that moves the heathen women to sacrifice their babies to their heathen gods.

God has made us for Himself. First, and above all else, He wants our love; and when we give Him our hearts and our undivided affections, all else will follow. It depends entirely upon how fully our hearts are given to Him as to how we give along other lines. Though we give Him everything else excepting our hearts, though we give all else with a divided heart, we are to be utterly contemned. "What doth Jehovah thy God require of thee, but to fear Jehovah thy God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve Jehovah thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul" (Deut. 10:12). "If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, he would utterly be contemned."

CHAPTER XLV

"MY VINEYARD WHICH IS MINE IS BEFORE ME." 8:8-12.

8:8. **"We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts; what shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for?"** Historically, this refers to the concern and perplexity of the early church concerning the Gentiles being brought in, after there was undeniable proof that they were included in God's plan. In Ezekiel 16:46, the Gentiles are called the sister of the Jew. The Gentiles, as yet, have heard the gospel only in scattering instances; and the Jewish believers, seeing that God has visited the Gentiles too, are perplexed to know how they are to bring the gospel to them, and what they are to do with them. How many questions of Jewish ceremonial laws came up. How the question of circumcision convulsed the whole church, until through Paul, God revealed to the early church the mystery of the gospel; namely, "That the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (Eph. 3:6).

Then was the question asked, what shall we do with our little sister in the day in which she is asked for? Only through hearing the Word come faith and love, and the Gentiles had not heard the gospel as yet. They had not put on the breastplate of faith and love; their breasts were unformed, they were not ready for either marriage or for bearing children. Because of their deep prejudice, which the very law of Jehovah had fostered in them, none but the Jews

can know the perplexity that this question caused in the early church.

The Jewish people were forbidden by the law, which God gave them through Moses, to have any dealings with the Gentiles unless the latter were circumcised and became proselytes. When they were faced with the revelation that the Gentiles were fellow-heirs and fellow-members of the body, and also fellow-partakers of the promises in Christ Jesus, the very foundation of their religious worship seemed to drop from beneath their feet. The Jews had not yet fully apprehended that the law, with all its rites and ceremonies, was done away. They would have required the Gentiles to enter the Church of Christ through the Jewish door of circumcision, and become approved through diligently keeping the law. Hence came contention, and the question was anxiously asked: "What shall we do with this little sister, now that we see she is spoken for?"

8:9. **"If she be a wall, we will build upon her a turret of silver: and if she be a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar."** The wall and the door are the two principal parts of a building. The wall is a symbol of strength, and in Isa. 26:1 we are told that in that day we shall have a strong city, and Jehovah will appoint Salvation for walls and bulwarks. In this verse of the Song of Solomon, the Jewish believers say that if the Gentiles prove to be a wall, they will build upon her a turret of silver. As we have said before, "silver" is a symbol of the atonement through which God brought salvation to the world. Comparing the verse in Isaiah with the verse which we are now considering, we see that the walls are to be Salvation, which means that the strength and protection shall be Salvation; and Salvation came only through the atonement of Jesus Christ.

The converted Hebrews determine that if the Gentiles receive the gospel and turn away from idols to serve the liv-

ing God, thus becoming a wall, they will not build upon her the Jewish rites and ceremonies. Peter, in the conference concerning this matter, gave the following decision: "Now, therefore, why make ye trial of God, that ye should put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in like manner as they" (Acts 15:10-11).

All the dead works must be done away, there can be no wood, hay nor stubble built upon that wall; no meats, and drinks, and Sabbath days, no ceremonial laws (Col. 2:16, 17). This wall of Salvation was to be built through simple faith in Jesus Christ, and in the atonement He wrought upon Calvary. This, indeed, would be a tower or turret of silver, which would be as strong as the One who brought salvation to us; it would be as high as Heaven, and as pure as the Word of God, which it fulfilled.

The wall symbolizes strength and protection; but upon this wall, adding to its strength and being a part of it, is a turret or battlement erected through faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ. This battlement is impregnable to the enemy; none can tear it down, neither can any come up against it and not be brought to naught.

Not only must the little sister be a wall, but she must be a door, which is the only entrance into the building. "God opened a door of faith unto the Gentiles" (Acts 14:27). Christ is the door of the sheep, and we see this meaning beautifully set forth here, by the little sister being enclosed with boards of cedar, which is a symbol of Christ's sinless manhood. The Church of Christ shall be crowned with His atoning work upon the cross, and shall be protected and clothed with Him who did this work.

8:10. **"I am a wall, and my breasts like the towers thereof; then was I in His eyes as one that found peace."**

She was established and grew so rapidly, that in a short time she was a wall, and her faith and love were like the turrets of the walls. It is through faith that we put on Jesus Christ, it is through faith that the boards of cedar enclose us, as we are clothed in Him. But faith works only through love. The little unformed sister soon exceeded her elder sister in strength and beauty, and we now see her joined to the bride.

Most wonderful were the faith and love that were perfected in those heathen converts! Paul speaks of the faith and love of the Colossians toward the saints, and He rejoices in the work of faith and labor of love of the Thessalonians. The faith and love, shown by the early church, as recorded in the New Testament, show that the Gentile church was indeed a wall, crowned with the beauty and power of the finished work of the atonement of Jesus Christ.

Her breasts, or her faith and love, were like beautiful turrets, and through this faith and love did she put off all unworthy things and put on Jesus Christ; and thus she was enclosed in Him. It was then that she found peace with her Beloved, and with all who had been brought nigh to Him before she was spoken for. She too became a part of the company of the bride of Christ, which is elsewhere called the Shulamite, or the daughter of peace.

8:11, 12. **"Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon; he let out the vineyard unto keepers; every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver."** The literal meaning of Baal-hamon is "the owner of a multitude." Not only is the Lord Jesus Christ the owner of a multitude, but He has planted His Vineyard in the midst of this multitude; and the multitude are planted in His Vineyard. In the Old Testament, the people of God were as the sands of the sea; and throughout the Book of Revelation, we see that the Redeemed throng is pictured as a great multitude which no man can number.

Under the law, the Vineyard of the Lord was conditionally given to the Jews; this is represented in different places of both the Old and the New Testaments as a vineyard that is let out to keepers. A Scripture that vividly portrays the unfaithfulness of the Jewish nation and the transference of the Vineyard of the Lord to the Gentile church, is given in Matt. 21:33-44. The householder planted a vineyard and set a hedge about it; he let it out to husbandmen and went to another country. The treatment of the servants perfectly sets forth the way the Jews persecuted and killed the prophets of God; and finally they killed the heir, Jesus Christ. We are told that "The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."

In this portion of the Song of Solomon which we are now considering, it is the bride that is speaking; and she is made up of both Jew and Greek, of both bond and free. The vineyard has been taken away from the Jewish nation or the unfaithful keepers, and given to the Gentile church. The bride earnestly covenants that she will be faithful to render unto Solomon the thousand which is His due, and to those who keep the fruit shall be given two hundred. "They that minister about sacred things eat of the things of the temple, and they that wait upon the altar have their portion with the altar. Even so did the Lord ordain that they that proclaim the gospel should live of the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:13, 14).

In the Song of Solomon, the keepers were to bring to Solomon a thousand pieces of silver for the fruit of the vineyard; and the silence that follows this statement, shows that they were not faithful in giving to the owner of the vineyard the revenue thereof. That this was true, is clearly brought out in the passage in Matthew, and is also a matter of Jewish history. This infidelity was the cause of God setting them aside for a season; and scattering them throughout the nations, while He turned to the Gentiles.

8:12. **"My vineyard, which is mine, is before me; thou, O Solomon, shalt have the thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred."** Though the Lord may let us tend a portion of His great Vineyard, though He may let us minister to other souls in different ways, there is a part of the Vineyard of the Lord, which He actually gives to each one of us; and that is the vineyards of our own lives. In this way He gives His Vineyard to the bride, each virgin receiving a portion.

He would have us guard our hearts above all that we treasure and protect, for out of them are the issues of life. It is this hidden place that must be watched and tended more than all that appears on the outside. We cannot judge the condition within, by the exterior; for many times, the outward appearance is either better or worse than appears before the face of God. We must guard and protect the roots and hidden fibers of our beings, our thoughts, our impulses, our desires.

We must put away everything that is not of God that is hidden and unseen, as zealously as we put away the defects that appear upon the outside, which humble us when they are seen by others. It is *our* Solomon who has entrusted to us the care of our lives and hearts; it is our Lord Jesus Christ who has warned us to watch and pray that we enter not into temptation.

Historically, we see the Apostolic Church longing for the presence of the Lord, and yet rejoicing in the confidence He has in them and the sacred trust He has bestowed upon them. With faithfulness did they work and tend the Vineyard of the Lord, and especially that part of it comprised in their own lives. So faithfully did they watch their own vineyards, that over and over the Apostle Paul exhorted his followers to follow and imitate him.

As the early church saw the full import of the setting

aside of the Jews as a nation, and as they apprehended how God's people had failed Him and crucified their Messiah, with the more vehement zeal did they tend the Lord's flock, pouring out their lives even unto death. They counted nothing in any way as dear unto themselves, so that they finished their course and the ministry which God had entrusted unto them. These first virgins of the bridechamber were indeed faithful unto death.

This precious ending of the Song of Solomon applies not only to the early church, but it applies most solemnly to every virgin, every overcomer that has joined the Blood-washed throng since those early days. Not those that do the King's business negligently, shall be in this company. Not those who pamper their flesh and let it overrun their lives, shall appear in this company. Not those who examine their vineyards only now and then shall bring up to the Heavenly Solomon an increase of a thousand.

It is those who dwell in their gardens and tend them day and night, those who ever keep them before their eyes, that shall be well-pleasing to the Owner of the Vineyard. Thieves do not always come in the night to steal, but sometimes they come in the middle of the day when it is the lightest. This is frequently the case in spiritual things. When everything is going smoothly and the sun seems to be the brightest, there is the most danger of the husbandman letting down, and lying down to rest. We may be sure if the enemy comes and finds us slumbering, and trusting the prosperity of circumstances rather than obeying our Lord and watching, he will not be so considerate as to wait until the night of affliction arouses us, before he attacks us.

When prosperity surrounds us, when we seem to be going on with leaps and bounds, then must we be more watchful and diligent. It is when the way is easy, when the sun is shining as though no cloud could ever again cover it, that

self-confidence creeps in; and the blight of carelessness and indolence strikes the vines. When the enemy seems to have forgotten us, it is a sure indication that we must arm ourselves with "All prayer" and keep our shield of faith in readiness.

We must be on the alert when the waves are going over our heads, and the darkness of affliction and trial encompass us, for it is then that fear and doubt attack us. It is then that despair and questionings arise, which will devastate a beautiful vineyard more than all the tempests and cyclones that can strike it. With the earnest children of God, trials and suffering always drive them closer to Christ's bleeding side, and they lean harder upon Him as the storms and persecutions increase. Their hearts cry: "Whom have I in Heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee" (Ps. 73:25).

It is with great joy, that the bride receives this sacred charge from her Beloved. He has left her for the Mountain of Spices, where He will remain until the day break, and the shadows flee away; and He has told her to occupy until He comes. The last and most precious charge He gave her, was to watch and tend the vineyard of her own life. This is first mentioned in ch. 1:6, where we find her tending the vineyard of the world and neglecting her own vineyard. In ch. 2:15 and ch. 4:16, her vineyard, which she is beginning to tend, is preciously set forth. At the end of this inspiring book, we leave the bride watching for the return of her Lord. She is filled with holy zeal and determination to so watch and tend her vineyard, that she shall have great increase for her Beloved when He comes for His own, and the harvest is gathered home.

She rejoices that God has called her to be conformed to the image of His own dear Son; and in order that she may do this, He has given her His Word whereby she may be

instructed how to guard and tend every avenue of her life. She rejoices that He has really given her this sacred trust, and she fervently determines that it shall ever be before her eyes; that she will not neglect nor lose sight of it day nor night until He comes and receives it from her.

She is not working with the motive of self-interest, nor for what it will bring to her. She is not even thinking of the joy that comes from obeying God and being in His will. We scarcely realize the mixed motives that defile our prayers and even enter into our obedience to God. We think we desire only His glory; but we become taken up with the satisfaction we shall have when we are victorious, and with the joy that will be ours when we reach the place where we live and walk in the Spirit continually. We pray for healing and think that we want it for God's glory, but we are really taken up with the advantage it will bring to us.

There is nothing so deceiving as our motives. We pray that God will save souls, that He will bring us into closer touch and communion with Him, we pray for many things that are right and legitimate and would be to His glory; but if we could analyze our motives, we should be dismayed to find how much of self has entered in. Why do you long for your flesh and the moving of the self-like to be put away? Why are you praying that the Holy Spirit shall take full control of you, enabling you to continually live and walk in the Spirit? Why have you prayed those prayers of the past, which have gone up before the face of God, bearing such great petitions and such unspeakable promises?

Has your motive and desire been that God shall be glorified, or have you looked at the joy and benefit that would come to you? Why have you grieved that there were so many waste places in your life, so many unworthy things, so much that was unchristlike? Has your one sorrow and grief been, that your Lord has not been glorified in you as

God had planned? or was it regret for your own failures and humiliation, because of the effect they had upon your prestige and influence with others?

Too often we are concerned that the thousand shall be ours, and we give the two hundred to the Lord. We want all the joy, we are thinking of our own delight and the increase in our own lives; but we forget that all must be given to our Solomon, and He gives back to us the two hundred; for it is the bride who tends the Vineyard of the Lord.

In the place of mourning over the care she must give to the vineyard of her life, and shrinking from the suffering as the great Husbandman prunes and cleanses the vines and plants, the bride rejoices that the Heavenly Solomon has given her this sacred charge to perform while He is absent in a distant country. There is increasing joy and rejoicing as the pleasant plants in this vineyard increase and bear fruit to the glory of God. It is when we desire everything in order that God may be glorified, that our faith grows strong, and springs out and lays hold of God in a way that is impossible when we have our minds set upon what we are going to get out of it. The bride covenants that her Beloved shall have the thousand. What intensity of purpose fills the heart of the bride, as she determines that she will keep this charge continually before her in order that she may not lose any of the increase that God is waiting to give her.

Beloved, how much fruitage have we to offer to our Lord? How much has been to His glory? How many times have we seen and searched out the little foxes, and followed them to their hiding-places? How many times have we destroyed them through faith in the death of Jesus Christ, who has delivered us from all these things? How many large foxes that we cannot get rid of, are holding corners in our lives? When they were small and weak was the time for us to catch and destroy them; but now they are stronger than we are, and are sapping the spiritual life out of us.

If we cannot tend the vineyards of our own lives and souls, we must not think that the Lord will entrust us with the oversight of the vineyards of other souls. Although thousands of men and women are out in "The work of the Lord," it is sad to see how many there are among them, who were evidently never called out by the Lord of the Vineyard. The first work in the Lord's Vineyard, which He entrusts to us and calls upon us to do, is to care for our own lives and to first partake of the fruit.

We must put off the flesh, we must put away all error, we must be established and builded upon His Word and upon His Truth. We must be strong to stand for the Truth of the gospel, and in order to do this, we must know what the gospel is in a clear and definite way. Only as we daily put the gospel to the proof by taking up our cross and following our precious Lord, can it be made flesh in us and be quickened to us so that we shall have utterance to give it out.

It is through our union with Christ in His death, that everything that is dishonoring to God is put off; it is through our union with Him in His resurrection, that we are raised to walk in newness of life, and are able to put Him on so that His life is manifested in our mortal bodies. It matters not how far along we are on the Christian journey, nor how much we have attained; constant vigilance is required if we enter into, and abide in this relation. Until the day break and the shadows flee away, we must watch and pray, we must labor and wait, that when He comes, we shall be found ready and waiting, and shall not be found naked.

There is a significant touch in here, of which we may well take notice. We are told that it was a thousand pieces of *silver* that the bride was to render to Solomon. Silver is a symbol of the atonement of Jesus Christ; and the word, "thousand," means an infinitely great number. The thought is, that through the work of Jesus Christ, this increase is

brought forth for the Owner of the Vineyard. Every time our faith goes out to Christ and His finished work on Calvary, every time we partake in His death and put off the flesh, we add a piece of silver to the revenue that He has a right to expect from the vineyards He has bought.

As we die daily that His life may be manifested, we add piece by piece to the increase we have covenanted to give to Him. Let it encourage our hearts to remember that every time we put to the test our union with Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection, we are depositing precious pieces of silver to carry up to Him. The two hundred which is given back to us, is the joy and blessing we receive in our own souls and lives every time we come out victoriously and take an advance step. Our profit depends entirely upon the increase of the pieces of silver that have been won for Solomon.

CHAPTER XLVI

"EVEN SO, COME, LORD JESUS!" 8:13, 14.

8:13. **"Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken for thy voice; cause me to hear it."** Again the voice of the Bridegroom is heard by the bride, and for the last time in this ineffable book. Only those who are worthy in His worthiness will hear His voice in this way; only with such a one is there a hearkening for His voice. And those who thus hear His voice, are those who continually dwell in the gardens; watching the vineyards of their own souls and attending to the duties that have been entrusted them by the Lord.

They are not staying in the world or living in the flesh part of the time, while the thorns and thistles are overrunning the vineyard the Lord has given them; but they have taken up their abode where they can watch it day and night; and the Lord comes down and walks with them. There is unearthly joy and holy bliss beyond description in walking with the Lord; and many times there is keen pain and abasement.

As He takes us by the hand and leads us up and down the vineyards of our souls and lives; as He points out this fence of His Truth that must be built up and made strong, so that error cannot get in; as He points out another place where, through compromise, we have let a fence fall down that was once high and strong, we are humbled and weep tears of repentance before Him. As His approval rests upon the fruit that is ripening, and the care we have taken of it

by His grace, our hearts rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

As He points out this place where some small fox is hiding away; as He shows us another place where some blight is threatening the pleasant plants; as He points out many things that must be taken away or changed, and reveals many precious plants that are lacking in our vineyards, again we rejoice, though with humiliation and sorrow.

When God points out these things to the bride of Christ, she does not rest back satisfied with knowing about them; neither does she mistake the dealing for obedience and possession; but with deep humility, down low at the feet of Jesus Christ, she does "all the Lord hath spoken." She builds up every fence of God's Word, that her vineyard may be protected from all error and from man's theories and teaching. She tries the spirits and refuses to give place to the new revelations and, so-called, new light (properly speaking, new and greater darkness). She keeps herself far from a false matter, rooting up and putting every unworthy thing far out of her life. She searches out every hidden fox, she does not overlook the least blight; and thus she keeps her sacred charge before her continually.

As long as we are in these mortal bodies, with obedient hearts, we must watch the dealings of the Lord; and treasure every conviction and uncovering of our shortage more than the blessings. We must refuse to be deceived or lulled into negligence and false peace. How incalculable is the loss we have sustained through the enemy stealing from us the results God intended from His workings and dealings.

It is a wonderful thing to dwell in the gardens; this is where the waters flow, and the Hidden Manna falls. Those who abide there in obedience, learn to know every corner, every distant place, every hidden part; and they are able to tend it so that Solomon receives a thousand increase. They

are separated from the world and the flesh, from people and things. They live like pilgrims and strangers as they walk with Him day by day. He is dealing and revealing the Truth to them, He is purging and cleansing every place in their lives, to the glory of His name. As they dwell and walk with Him, they do not forget His admonitions and dealings; but they hasten to obey so that He need not deal and admonish them over and over concerning the same things.

The closer you draw to God, the more the Holy Spirit will lay hold upon you and control you. The more you are brought to live and walk in the Spirit continuously beholding Jesus Christ, the more quickly you will discern those things in your words and actions, in your thoughts and motives, in your appearance and ways, that are unchristlike. This discernment will not come from introspection, from examining and digging around in your vineyard yourself; it will not come from wounded pride because of being discerned by others. It will come from a continual gaze fixed upon Jesus; a continual looking and listening to Him, until every sound of flesh will be like the sound of a cracked bell.

Let us yield to God as He begins to show us anything; let us hasten to be co-workers with Him, as the spade of His dealings digs down into our lives and brings to light all that must be put away. Let us not walk in the natural like men or like children, but let us walk like children of the King; let us walk like heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.

"The companions hearken for thy voice." The people around us are watching us, they are looking and examining us to see exactly what we are, regardless of our testimonies. They are hearkening for our voices, not only in the meetings and when we are in the Spirit, but when we are not conscious of their scrutiny. They are measuring our lives and watching us when we do not know it. It is not for our own

sakes alone, that God is calling us to walk softly before Him, and admonishing us that our words and actions must be like Jesus Christ. In one sense, our personal interest and profit are of minor importance. The most important thing is that Christ may be honored and not dishonored, that He may be shown forth in our lives in all His beauty and glory. The next important thing is for the sake of those about us who are repelled or drawn to Christ by what they see in the lives of His followers.

Those around us are listening for our voices; they are watching to see if there is eternal fruit in our lives. Many who are hungry for God, who are reaching out their hands for Him if so be they may touch Him, are hearkening for our voices to teach them and guide them to the Fountain where their hunger shall be satisfied and their thirst quenched.

They are hungry for words of life, of edification, of grace seasoned with salt. They are longing for words of comfort and admonition; of warning and advice. Their hearts reach out to those about them who know the Lord better than they do. They would learn of the pitfalls that have been avoided or fallen into by older Christians, that they may escape the danger. They would know how to dwell in the presence of Christ and love Him more.

Beloved, do we realize that, "The companions hearken for thy voice?" What do those around us hear who are hearkening for our voices? When they are hungry for words of life that will point them to Him who is the life, do they hear only unworthy words that point out our own defects and lack of entering in? When the babe in the Lord or the discouraged Christian hearkens for our voices to impart edification and encouragement, when they need the grace, well-seasoned with salt, do they hearken in vain? Child of God, you little know how many around you may have hearkened

for your voice, and hoped to hear from God through you, and have been disappointed. You little know how many have come to you, attracted by your testimonies and the appearance of spirituality when you were at your best, and they have found only leaves.

When error has arisen, how many of God's children have hearkened for the voice of this or that leader or servant of God? And how many of God's dear children are today off in rank error because the watchmen did not know the Truth and warn them? That which is spoken in Isa. 56:10, 11, has come to pass with many of the so-called servants of God. "His watchmen are blind, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber. . . . These are shepherds that cannot understand: they have all turned to their own way, each one to his own gain, from every quarter."

"Cause me to hear it." Our Beloved would also hear our voices ascending to Him in praise and worship, in prayer and intercession. He would have us commune with Him continually; for through communion and fellowship with Him, our souls and lives are nourished. When our precious Lord is waiting for us to talk with Him, are we in the flesh chattering with men or women, hindering them and ourselves? Our Lord always covets our confidence. He would have us come to Him first and tell Him everything. He would have us confide in Him, ask help from Him, talk everything over with Him before we go to any one else.

If we did this, many times we would not go to any one else at all, and would be saved much trouble and humiliation. But so often do we speak first with those about us; we confide in them and ask advice of them; we trust in man whose breath is in his nostrils, who is in nothing to be accounted of. We forsake the Fountain of living waters for cisterns broken and dry, unreliable and treacherous.

8:14. **"Make haste, my Beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices."** Again, and for the last time, the bride speaks to the Bridegroom, who is unseen but near. The book opens with the cry of the ancient church for the coming of their Messiah. It sets forth also the hunger of the virgins of the bride of Christ for a clearer revelation of the Lord, and a greater entrance into His chambers and presence. The Spirit has led us over the path the bride's feet have trod, as she has obeyed and ever followed on after her Lord. At the end we find her diligently keeping the garden of her own soul, while she works in the Lord's great Vineyard, and with unslumbering eyes watches and waits for His return.

The Mountains of Spices are the fourth mountains mentioned in the Song of Solomon. Though the Mountains of Spices are closely connected and, in a measure, identified with the Hill of Frankincense and the Mountain of Myrrh, they are not the same mountains. The Hill of Frankincense (Calvary) and the Mountain of Myrrh (the tomb), are used as symbols of Christ's redemptive work while it was in process of accomplishment. The Mountains of Spices arise majestic and eternal from the Cross and the Tomb, and are a symbol of the same work fully accomplished and eternal. In other words, "The Mountains of Spices" symbolize His perfected finished work, through which we are redeemed and delivered from the hands of all our enemies; through which we are made worthy to attain to the high calling of God.

Only through the gospel does Christ come to us. As we approach the Mountains of Spices and put His finished work on Calvary to the test, as we yield to the cross daily, Christ comes to us and reveals Himself in the gospel. He is like a roe or a young hart as He comes to us over the Mountains of Spices. It is over these Mountains of Spices (Christ's finished work on Calvary) that God and His Christ come

to us; and it is over these fragrant Mountains that we must pass, in order to have access to God. He reveals Himself to us, He reveals to us the power there is in the gospel, which is nothing more or less than the "Glad Tidings" of Christ's redemptive work. We live in the atmosphere of the fragrant Mountains of Spices, upon which Christ is resting; upon which the salvation of every soul is resting; upon which God's eternal plans and their accomplishment are resting.

Through the work that Christ did upon the cross, we live to the glory of God while here on earth. But eminently above all else, it is through this work that we are prepared for "The appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ; which in its own times He shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable" (1 Tim. 6:14-16). God's supreme purpose is that we may be prepared to dwell forever in His presence, and in this light unapproachable.

Those who are dwelling in the presence of the Lord, have their vision more and more clarified to behold the signs of the times and the unseen things. When the light of His countenance is continually lifted up upon us, we begin to discern the lights and shadows about us. Already, the heavy blackness that precedes the dawn, is falling upon the earth; and the faint rays of the morn are discerned by the anointed eye. The hearts of those who are walking closest to God, are already crying day and night for the Lord to hasten His Coming. The signs of His Coming are increasing, and the prophecies are being rapidly fulfilled.

Even since I began to write upon this Exposition, the signs of the Coming of the Lord have increased in a most startling way. Wars and rumors of wars have arisen; but Jesus Christ told us not to be troubled, for these things must needs come to pass. Nation has already risen against na-

tion; kingdom has already risen against kingdom, until nearly every large nation upon earth is either engulfed, or in danger of being engulfed in one of the bloodiest wars the world has ever known. Iniquity is multiplying so rapidly, that it brings fear and apprehension to the heart; and the love of many is waxing cold. The hearts of men are fainting for fear of the things that are coming to pass upon the face of the earth.

With all this, men are saying: "Peace and safety!" These words are ominous signs of the end, as is foretold in the Word of God. The words of God are literally fulfilled in these days, and "Peace and safety" face us from buildings and fences, from railroad stations and even from the advertisement bills at the doors of the moving-picture theatres, which abound in every prominent street. "When they are saying, Peace and safety, sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall in no wise escape." (1 Thess. 5:1 ff.) But we are not to let these things deceive us, for we are not in the darkness, that that day should overtake us as a thief, for we are sons of light and sons of the day. Therefore let us not sleep as do the rest, but let us watch and be sober.

His Coming is so near that the hard things that face us do not matter, as we lift up our heads and rejoice because our redemption draweth nigh. We do not know at what moment we shall be lifted up out of it all, and be caught away to meet the Lord in the air, and thus shall we be forever with the Lord. He is calling upon us to recognize the signs of His Coming, not setting a day for His appearing, for no man knoweth the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man cometh.

Child of God, do you know that the midnight cry is now going forth throughout the land? Do you hear it sounding in your heart? "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out

to meet Him!" As you draw closer to Jesus Christ and let Him have His way, you will feel His drawing and wooing, you will receive the conviction and dealing of the Holy Spirit increasingly in your heart and life. From your heart will go forth the earnest longing and prayer: "Make haste, my Beloved, and be Thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the Mountains of Spices."

Has the Holy Spirit stamped upon your heart's vision the portrait of your Beloved and His unspeakable beauties, and the portrait of yourself if you attain to being His bride? Have you received a deeper revelation of the mutual love between Christ and His bride, as you have been meditating upon the Song of Solomon? Has God planted within your heart a hunger for Christ and for His love such as you have never felt before?

God has given us the Song of Solomon with its vivid word-pictures of Christ and His bride, together with its burning revelations of their mutual love in order that we may compare our attainments, our fidelity and love to Him, with the portraits therein set forth.

In this ineffable Song of Solomon, He has given us a strain from the Heavenly choir, the theme of which is "Christ and His bride." Has this divine music sounded upon your heart until your spirit has been caught away to the Mount of the Lord? Have you received a deeper revelation of your high calling in Him, and has the Spirit revealed clearer visions of those things that mortal eye cannot see nor ear hear, neither can the human heart contain, even the things that God has prepared for you and me? If you will draw close to God, He will anoint your eyes with Heavenly eye-salve: He will give you an eternal perspective; He will cause you to behold the things that are unseen and eternal as you lose sight of the things that are seen and temporal.

He would have us smell the fragrance of the oils of

Jesus Christ and discern the preciousness and power in His Name, which is as oil poured forth. As we apprehend His fragrance, we shall hasten to anoint ourselves with this oil of eternal fragrance. We shall learn to use the Name that is above all names, with holy boldness; and He will be glorified and the enemy will be brought to naught.

Have you felt the drawing of your Beloved and have you yielded to the cords of love, running after Him faster and faster as He has held you up by the right hand of His righteousness? Have you left everybody and everything and hastened after Him with the speed of the horses in Pharaoh's chariots? Have you yielded to Him so that He could bring you into the chamber of Humility? And has He brought you into the other unspeakable chambers of the King of Glory? Have you lain at His feet in abandonment as the revelation of His everlasting love has broken in upon your soul?

It is through obedience alone that we go from chamber to chamber, from experience to experience in our approach and knowledge of Him, and in the realization of His love. Did you let Him woo you on until you sat with Him in the green pastures at His table of communion? As you communed with Him and fed upon the living Bread that He set before you, did He who is the Bread of life find lodgment in your heart and become to you a precious cruse of myrrh hidden away in your bosom?

Have you yielded to Him until He has so clothed you with Himself that you were decked with the Henna-flowers of His attributes, which took the place of your unlovely attributes? And refreshed with their fragrance and beauty every one that beheld you?

If you have passed through these experiences, suddenly you have been brought into His Banqueting House, and your soul has been ravished with the revelation of His love. You

have discerned the support of His left hand under you, bearing you up under all oppression; and His right hand has undertaken for you in the impossible things, to the glory of His name. Your eyes have pierced the darkness, and you have seen His banner, "Love," floating over you, and you have rejoiced in its sweetness and protecting power.

We have followed the footsteps of the bride as portrayed by the Holy Spirit, we have seen her hastening to meet her Beloved as she heard His voice calling her. We have beheld her hidden away in the clefts of the Rock of Ages, and climbing upward upon that stair that was set up when the Rock was rent. We have seen her as she traveled through the wilderness in the Chariot of Salvation, and our hearts have been ravished by the descriptions of the bride, which are so vividly given by the Bridegroom and by the daughters of Jerusalem.

Higher and higher does she climb; faster and faster does she go as though borne upon eagles' wings. The banners of victory that float over her, increase day by day, until suddenly, as she is faithfully performing the ministry that God has entrusted to her in His Vineyard, she is caught away among the chariots of the Prince, in the ranks of the overcomers.

As we read and meditate upon these experiences of the bride, the Holy Spirit will let their preciousness break in upon our understanding. He will lead us to examine our lives and see just where we are in the preparation, and how far we have gone in the race. As we yield to Him, He will square up our lives and all concerning us, to His Word and the requirements therein contained, until we shall be caught away among the chariots of the Prince.

It is not easy to yield to Him and let Him take away all our strength; but as we do this, He will manifest His strength, which is made perfect in our weakness. Harder and harder

will we lean upon our Beloved as we become more and more weak in ourselves. Have you commenced to enter into this precious experience, and has the peace of God stood sentinel at the door of your heart as you have seen all in which you trusted, swept away? Have you been undismayed, and have you even rejoiced when you have been shut up to rely upon His everlasting arm in all things small and great?

It is not enough to hear the midnight cry that is now going forth, and to know that it is the midnight cry. We must make sure that we have on the wedding garment and have made ourselves ready; we must see that all things are prepared that we shall need if we are in that blest company. It is only as we love Him, that we shall love His appearing; it is only as we are separated from the earthy and earthly, that we can be caught up with Him when He comes in the clouds for His bride.

Cast everything aside that you cannot take with you, for if it is not cast aside, it will hold you down like heavy weights. Even a small thing will pin you to the earth so that you cannot rise up to meet Him. Count all things but refuse that you may know Christ and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, becoming conformed unto His death, that you may attain unto the resurrection from among the dead.

There is a remnant of God's people over the whole earth that have taken heed to the word of prophecy as to a lamp shining in a dark place. Already the rays of dawn are appearing upon the horizon; and the day-star has arisen in their hearts, foretelling the approach of Eternal Day at the Coming of Him who is the Light. This remnant have fixed their eyes upon Jesus, they are looking away from the earth, from people, from everything to the Everlasting Hills of God. They have not here an abiding city, but they are looking for "The city which hath the foundations whose builder and

maker is God" (Heb. 11:10). This city "Hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb" (Rev. 21:23). Into this city, none shall enter, but those that have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb.

If our lamps are trimmed and burning; if we have our loins girded with the Truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ; if we are following hard after Him, day and night shall our hearts yearn for His Coming; and we shall not fear to stand before Him because in that day we shall not be found naked. "Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet manifest what we shall be. We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."

Children of God, followers of the Lamb, the Spirit constrains me to beseech you to give diligence to make your calling and election sure. Hasten! Hasten! put on the wedding garment! Put off all that is unworthy, and be clothed in Jesus Christ, who is our righteousness. Refuse all slumber and letting down, for the Home-coming is near at hand, and we can have an abundant entrance in, to the glory of our Lord.

BEHOLD, THE COMING OF THE LORD DRAWETH NEAR!

The words of the Bridegroom ring in our ears: "Until the day be cool, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the Mountain of Myrrh, and to the Hill of Frankincense." With fervent love and yearning for our Lord, our hearts cry out: "Make haste, my Beloved, and be Thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the Mountains of Spices."

Again we hear the voice of our Bridegroom, and our hearts rejoice as the answer echoes down from the courts of Heaven: "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is. Hold fast that which thou hast that no man take thy crown.

He that overcometh, I will make a pillar in the temple of my God, and He shall go out thence no more; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of Heaven from my God, and mine own new name. He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in His throne."

"EVEN SO, COME, LORD JESUS!"

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